SISTERHOOD AS STRATEGY:
THE COLLABORATIONS OF AMERICAN WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE GILDED AGE

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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

SISTERHOOD AS STRATEGY: THE COLLABORATIONS OF AMERICAN WOMEN
ARTISTS IN THE GILDED AGE

presented by Kelsey Frady Malone,
a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
and hereby certify that, in their opinion, is worthy of acceptance.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
List of Illustrations	vi
Abstract	xviii
Introduction: “A Band of Independent Partners in Talent”	1
Chapter One: Alice Barber Stephens, the “Leader of Her Class”: Creating a Space for Women Artists in Philadelphia	30
Chapter Two: Enid Yandell: Negotiating Independent and Collective Agency as a “Famous Lady Sculptor”	80
Chapter Three: Frances Benjamin Johnston and Her “Sisters of the Camera”	143
Conclusion	199
Illustrations	212
Bibliography	306
Vita	349

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure:

1. Elizabeth Shippen Green, *Life Was Made for Love and Cheer*, 1904, watercolor and charcoal on illustration board. Cabinet of American Illustration, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Originally published in *Harper's Magazine* vol. 109, no. 501 (September 1904): 506, to accompany Henry Van Dyke's poem "Inscriptions for a Friend's House."
2. Elizabeth Shippen Green, *Life Was Full of Love and Cheer* (detail), 1904.
3. Unidentified photographer, photograph of Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, and Henrietta Cozens, c. 1901, photographic print. Violet Oakley Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.
4. Unknown artist, photograph of Alice Barber Stephens, c. 1893. Published in "Alice Barber Stephens: Illustrator," *Woman's Progress* vol. 2, no. 2 (November 1893): frontispiece, and in Harold Payne, "American Women Illustrators," *Munsey's Magazine* vol. 11, no. 1 (April 1894): 56.
5. Alice Barber Stephens, *The Women's Life Class*, 1879, oil on cardboard, 12 x 14 in. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
6. Alice Barber Stephens, *The Women's Life Class*, c. 1879, engraving. Published in William C. Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," *Scribner's Monthly*, vol. 18, no. 5 (September 1879): 743.
7. Walter M. Davis, *The Male Life Class*, c. 1879, engraved by Alice Barber Stephens. Published in William C. Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," *Scribner's Monthly*, vol. 18, no. 5 (September 1879): 741.
8. Philip B. Hahs, *The Antique Class*, c. 1879, engraving. Published in William C. Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," *Scribner's Monthly*, vol. 18, no. 5 (September 1879): 737.
9. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Art Students League*, c. 1900, photograph, 8 x 10 in. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
10. Alice Barber Stephens, *The Women's Life Class* (detail), 1879.
11. Thomas Eakins, *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, 1876-1877, oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 26 1/8 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

12. Alice Barber Stephens, *The Chess Players*, 1880, wood engraving after Thomas Eakins, *The Chess Players*, 1876, oil on wood, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Cabinet of American Illustration, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Published in William C. Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America," *Scribner's Monthly* vol. 20, no. 1 (May 1880): 8.
13. Alice Barber Stephens, *On the Harlem*, 1880, wood engraving after Thomas Eakins, *The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake*, 1873, oil on canvas, 40 x 60 in. Published in Clarence Cook, "Spring Hereabouts," *Scribner's Monthly* vol. 20, no. 29 (June 1880): 165.
14. Mathilde Weil, photograph of Charlotte Harding in her studio at 10 South 18th Street, Philadelphia, c. 1903, platinum print. Charlotte Harding Collection, Brandywine River Museum, Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania.
15. Alice Barber Stephens, *Charlotte Harding*, 1900. Published in Regina Armstrong, "Representative American Women Illustrators: The Character Workers," *The Critic* vol. 37, no. 1 (July 1900): 47.
16. Charlotte Harding, *Portrait Sketch of Alice Barber Stephens*, 1900. Published in Regina Armstrong, "Representative American Women Illustrators: The Character Workers," *The Critic* vol. 37, no. 1 (July 1900): 44.
17. Alice Barber Stephens, "'He'd sooner see me by the table sewin' and makin' good use of my time than wastin' it on them novel books'." Illustration from Helen Reimensnyder Martin, *The Betrothal of Elypholate and Other Tales of the Pennsylvania Dutch* (New York: The Century Company, 1907): frontispiece.
18. Charlotte Harding, "His son Jakey heard, with dropped jaw, this unwifely defiance." Illustration from Helen Reimensnyder Martin, *The Betrothal of Elypholate and Other Tales of the Pennsylvania Dutch* (New York: The Century Company, 1907): 55.
19. Alice Barber Stephens, *Selma threw herself at full length on the ground*, c. 1895, watercolor. Cabinet of American Illustration, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Illustration from Gertrude Blake Stanton, "Three Chapters," *The Cosmopolitan* vol. 18, no. 6 (April 1896): 741.
20. *Collier's: The National Weekly*, vol. 40, no. 8 (November 16, 1907), featuring Charlotte Harding, illustration for
21. Unknown photographer, photograph of Alice Barber Stephens (right) and Charlotte Harding in their studio at 1004 Chestnut Street, c. 1899-1903, platinum print. Charlotte Harding Collection, Brandywine River Museum, Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania. Published in W. B. Crane, "America's Foremost

Woman Illustrator,” *Metropolitan Magazine*, no date. Alice Barber Stephens Papers, reel 4152, frame 351, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

22. Charlotte Harding, “*The both came to think of home as being together,*” c. 1902. Illustration for Anne Douglas Sedgwick, “A Forsaken Temple, Part I,” *The Century Magazine* vol. 65, no. 1 (November 1902): 49.
23. Mathilde Weil, photograph of Alice Barber Stephens and Charlotte Harding in their studio at 1004 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, c. 1899-1903, platinum print. Charlotte Harding Collection, Brandywine River Museum, Chadd’s Ford, Pennsylvania.
24. Cover of The Plastic Club Exhibition catalog for an exhibition of paintings and illustrations by Alice Barber Stephens, February – March 1897. The Plastic Club Archives, The Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
25. Alice Barber Stephens, *Selecting Miniatures*, watercolor and gouache over pencil on illustration board, 26 ¼ x 18 in. Cabinet of American Illustration, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Published as “*Buying Christmas Presents*” in *Harper’s Weekly* vol. 39, no. 1179 (December 14, 1895): 1179.
26. Cornelia Greenough, cover of The Plastic Club, Catalogue of the Third Annual Exhibition of Black and White Work and Designs, November – December 1899. The Plastic Club Archives, The Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
27. Jessie Willcox Smith, cover of The Plastic Club, Catalogue of the Second Annual Exhibition of Work in Black and White, October – November 1898. The Plastic Club Archives, The Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
28. Alice Barber Stephens, “*We shall need more women than there are here...*,” c. 1896. Illustration for Bessie Chandler, “The Woman’s Edition,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 13, no. 6 (May 1896): 5.
29. Alice Barber Stephens, “The Woman in Society,” part of “The American Woman” series, 1897. Published in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 2 (January 1897): frontispiece.
30. Alice Barber Stephens, “Woman in Religion,” part of “The American Woman” series, 1897. Published in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 4 (March 1897): frontispiece.
31. Alice Barber Stephens, *The Woman in the Home*, 1897, gouache on paper. The Kelly Collection of American Illustration, Great Falls, Virginia. Published as

part of “The American Woman” series in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 6 (May 1897): frontispiece.

32. Alice Barber Stephens, “The American Girl in Summer,” part of “The American Woman” series, 1897. Published in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 8 (July 1897): frontispiece.
33. Alice Barber Stephens, *Woman in Business*, 1897, oil on canvas, Brandywine River Museum, Chadd’s Ford, Pennsylvania. Published as part of “The American Woman” series in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 10 (September 1897): frontispiece.
34. Alice Barber Stephens, “The Beauty of Motherhood,” part of “The American Woman” series, 1897. Published in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 12 (November 1897): frontispiece.
35. “Largest Statue Ever Made by a Woman,” *The Courier-Journal*, February 21, 1897, Section 4, 2.
36. Unknown photographer, *Enid Yandell with Pallas Athena*, 1896. The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
37. Tennessee Centennial Exposition, Nashville, Tennessee, c. 1896. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
38. Unknown photographer, View of the east entrance of the Parthenon with the statue of *Pallas Athena* in the foreground, 1897. Photograph Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.
39. Advertisement for the Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition, c. 1896. Published in *Confederate Veteran* vol. 4, no. 1 (January 1896): II.
40. Advertisement for the Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition, c. 1896. The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
41. Unknown photographer, photograph of Enid Yandell, c. 1910. The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
42. Enid Yandell, *Royal Insurance Company Desk Panels*, c. 1890, oak and maple, 16 ft. in length. Location unknown. Published in C., “Bachelor Maid in Art,” *The Southern Magazine* vol. 5 (February 1895): 504.
43. Enid Yandell, *Hermes*, c. 1889, marble. Location unknown. Photograph in Enid Yandell Scrapbook, Vol. 94, The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

44. C. D. Arnold, *World's Columbian Exposition, Woman's Building*, 1891-1893. World's Columbian Exposition Photographs by C. D. Arnold, 1891-1894, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
45. C. D. Arnold, *World's Columbian Exposition, Woman's Building*, 1891-1893. World's Columbian Exposition Photographs by C. D. Arnold, 1891-1894, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
46. C. D. Arnold, *World's Columbian Exposition, Woman's Building*, 1891-1893. World's Columbian Exposition Photographs by C. D. Arnold, 1891-1894, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
47. Dimitrios Constantin, *The Caryatid Porch of the Erechtheion, Athens*, 1865, Albumen silver print. The John Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California.
48. Clipping from Enid Yandell's Scrapbook, Vol. 76, page 15, The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
49. Clipping from Enid Yandell's Scrapbook, Vol. 76, page 85, The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
50. Clipping from Enid Yandell's Scrapbook, Vol. 76, pages 88-89, The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
51. Unknown photographer, *Enid Yandell at Work*, c. 1891-1892. Published in Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981), 161.
52. Unknown photographer, *Enid Yandell and the White Rabbits in Lorado Taft's Studio*, c. 1891-1893. Enid Yandell Photograph Collection, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky
53. Unknown photographer, *Sculpture Studio in the World's Columbian Exposition Horticultural Building*, August 24, 1892. Chicago History Museum, ICHI-02492.
54. Unknown photographer, *Painting Class in MacMonnies' Studio*, c. 1895. Enid Yandell Photograph Collection, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
55. Unknown photographer, "*The Angels*," in *MacMonnies' studio, Paris*, c. 1895-1896. Enid Yandell Photograph Collection, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

56. Unknown photographer, photograph of Yandell (left) and three unidentified women, c. 1896-1897. Enid Yandell Photograph Collection, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. Published in Janet Scudder, "The Art Student in Paris," *Metropolitan Magazine* vol. 5, no. 3 (April 1897): 239.
57. Enid Yandell's proposed design for the *Confederate Monument*. Published in "To the Confederate Dead—The Executive Committee of the Kentucky Woman's Confederate Monument Association Selects a Design by Miss Enid Yandell—The Cost Estimated at \$12,000—Over Twenty Competitors," *The Courier-Journal*, September 20, 1894, 6.
58. Michael Muldoon, *Confederate Monument*, 1895, Louisville, Kentucky. Photograph taken c. 1895-1910, Furnas Family Album Collection, University of Louisville Photographic Archives, Louisville, Kentucky.
59. Michael Muldoon, *Confederate Monument*, 1895, Louisville, Kentucky. Photograph by the author, 2014.
60. Advertisement for the Muldoon Monument Company, Louisville, Kentucky. Published in *Confederate Veteran* vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1897): n.p.
61. Enid Yandell, *Emma Willard*, 1899, marble bust, destroyed in 1911. Photograph in Enid Yandell Scrapbook, Vol. 78, The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
62. Enid Yandell, *Carrie Brown Memorial Fountain*, 1901, bronze and granite, Providence, Rhode Island. Photograph taken c. 1901, Enid Yandell Photograph Collection, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.
63. Enid Yandell, *Daniel Boone*, cast 1906, bronze, 98 in. h. Cherokee Park, Louisville, Kentucky. Photography by the author, 2017.
64. Enid Yandell, *Lotus Flower Fountain*, 1902, bronze, 12 ¾ in. h. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.
65. Enid Yandell, *Satyr with Shell*, 1912, painted plaster fountain, 23 ½ in. h. x 2 in. diameter base. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.
66. Enid Yandell, *Hogan's Fountain* (also known as *Pan*), 1903-1905, bronze, Cherokee Park, Louisville, Kentucky. Photograph by the author, 2017.
67. Enid Yandell, *Hogan's Fountain*, 1903-1905. Photograph taken c. 1905-1916, Item no. 1982.01.627.p, Claude C. Matlack Collection, 1982.01, Photographic Archives, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky.

68. Janet Scudder, *Frog Fountain*, cast 1906, bronze, 37 ½ x 26 x 19 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
69. Enid Yandell, *The Gibson Girl* (Portrait Figurine of Elsie Yandell Barber), 1895, plaster, 14 3/8 in. h. The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.
70. Enid Yandell, *The Gibson Girl* (Portrait Figurine of Elsie Yandell Barber), 1895, plaster, 14 3/8 in. h. The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.
71. Enid Yandell, *The Gibson Girl* (Portrait Figurine of Elsie Yandell Barber), 1895, plaster, 14 3/8 in. h. The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.
72. Charles Dana Gibson, *He is Waiting for Me*, c. 1892. Published in Mrs. Burton Harrison, "Sweet Belles Out of Tune," *The Century Magazine* vol. 45, no. 1 (November 1892): 14.
73. *Woman with a Fan*, fourth century BCE, terra cotta, 10 in h. Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.
74. Jean-Léon Gerôme, *The Antique Pottery Painter*, 1893. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario.
75. Enid Yandell, *The Kiss Tankard*, 1899, bronze, 11 ½ x 7 in. Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, Rhode Island.
76. Enid Yandell, *The Kiss Tankard*, 1899, bronze, 11 ½ x 7 in. Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, Rhode Island.
77. Enid Yandell, *Bluebeard's Wife*, 1911, plaster relief, 16 ¼ in h. The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.
78. Enid Yandell, *Bluebeard's Wife*, 1911, plaster relief, 16 ¼ in h. The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.
79. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1905, photographic print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
80. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Students at work on a house built largely by them*, c. 1899, gelatin silver print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
81. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Debating Class, Carlisle Indian School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania*, 1901, cyanotype. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

82. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Self-Portrait (As Proper Victorian)*, c. 1896. Frances Benjamin Johnston Photographs Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
83. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Self-Portrait (as New Woman)*, 1896. Frances Benjamin Johnston Photographs Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
84. Advertisement for the Series III Vest Pocket Vanity Kodak, c. 1927.
85. The Kodak Girl advertisement, c. 1901.
86. The Kodak Girl advertisement, c. 1910.
87. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Frances Benjamin Johnston and her family in studio, 1332 V St., N.W., Washington, D.C.*, c. 1896, photographic print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
88. Unknown photographer, *Académie Julian, Paris, group of art students*, c. 1885, photographic print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
89. Unknown photographer, *Frances Benjamin Johnston, full, standing by wooded cliff at entrance to Mammoth Cave*, c. 1891, photographic print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
90. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *A Lining Stitcher (Woman) at Work, Lynn, Massachusetts*, c. 1895, photographic print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
91. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Rose garden and Frances Benjamin Johnston's house and photography studio, 1332 V. Street, NW, Washington, DC*, c. 1898 (printed later). Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
92. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Interior of Frances Benjamin Johnston's studio at 1332 V St. NW, Washington, D.C., showing a large camera mounted on wheels*, c. 1900, printed later. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
93. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Frances (Hodgson) Burnett, 1849-1924*, c. 1890-1910, photographic print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

94. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Susan B. Anthony*, c. 1890-1910, photographic print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
95. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Frances Benjamin Johnston having tea with Elbert Hubbard and Mills Thompson at her studio in Washington, D.C.*, c. 1900, printed later. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
96. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Costume Party of "The Push,"* c. 1902. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Johnston is pictured front, center.
97. Frances Benjamin Johnston, Excerpt from "The Evolution of the Great Exhibition," *Demorest's Family Magazine* vol. 346, no. 28 (April 1892): 319-328. (Pages 327-328 pictured).
98. James R. Applegate, *Jury of Philadelphia Photographic Salon* (F. Holland Day, Clarence H. White, Frances Benjamin Johnston, Henry Troth, and Gertrude Käsebier), 1899, tintype. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
99. Gertrude Käsebier, *The Manger*, 1899, platinum print. National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
100. Zaida Ben-Yusuf, *The Odor of Pomegranates*, 1899, platinum print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
101. Frances Stebbins Allen and Mary Electa Allen, *A Holbein Woman*, c. 1890-1892, gelatin silver print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
102. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "What a Woman Can Do with a Camera," *The Ladies' Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 10 (September 1897): 6-7. Illustrated with fifteen of Johnston's own photographs.
103. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: First: The Work of Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier," *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 6 (May 1901): 1.
104. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Second Article: Miss Mathilde Weil," *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 7 (June 1901):

105. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Third Article: Frances and Mary Allen," *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 8 (July 1901):
106. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Fourth Article: Emma J. Farnsworth," *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 9 (August 1901):
107. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Fifth Article: Eva Lawrence Watson (Mrs. Martin Schultze)," *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 11 (October 1901):
108. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Sixth Article: Zaida Ben-Yusuf," *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 12 (November 1901):
109. Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Seventh Article: Elizabeth Brownell," *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 19, no. 2 (January 1902):
110. Unknown photographer, *Frances Benjamin Johnston and Washington Camera Club looking at pictures*, c. 1890. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
111. Unknown photographer, *FBJ and Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier, famous photographer, on patio of a Venetian hotel*, 1905. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
112. Gertrude Käsebier, *Portrait of Frances Benjamin Johnston*, c. 1905. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
113. Gertrude Käsebier, *Portrait of Frances Benjamin Johnston*, c. 1905. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
114. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Mattie Edwards Hewitt*, c. 1913. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
115. Frances Benjamin Johnston and Mattie Edwards Hewitt, *Isadora Duncan's Six Star Pupils*, c. 1914. Published in "Isadora Duncan's Art," *Literary Digest*, May 1, 1915: 20. The byline reads, "Copyrighted by Miss Johnston-Mrs. Hewitt, New York."

116. Unknown artist, illustrations of Frances Benjamin Johnston (left) and Mattie Edwards Hewitt, c. 1912. Published in "They Photograph the Smart Set," *Vanity Fair* vol. 49 (December 14, 1912): 19.
117. Flyer for Johnston's and Hewitt's photography studio, c. 1913. Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
118. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Exhibit display area for architectural photographs by "Frances Benjamin Johnston, Mattie Edwards Hewitt, Official Photographers,"* c. 1913-1917. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
119. Unknown artist, photograph of Frances Benjamin Johnston and Mattie Edwards Hewitt, c. 1913. Published in "Matters of Interest to Women: The Camera Has Opened a New Profession for Women—Some of Those Who Have Made Good," *The New York Times*, April 20, 1913, 12.
120. A. K. Boursault, *Under the Skylight*, c. 1903, photomechanical reproduction, 4 3/8 x 5 1/2 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Published in *The Photographer*, May 7, 1904.
121. Unknown photographer, Pottery decorating class, Newcomb College Pottery Building, Washington Avenue Campus, New Orleans, c. 1905. Newcomb Art School Scrapbook, University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
122. Unknown photographer, *Newcomb Pottery designers working in a pottery decorating class conducted by Mary Sheerer*, c. 1905. Newcomb Art School Scrapbook, University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
123. Harriet Coulter Joor (decorator) and Joseph Meyer (potter), *Vase with a Design of Daffodils*, c. 1903, ceramic, 18 1/4 in. h. Newcomb Art Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
124. Maria de Hoa LeBlanc (decorator) and Joseph Meyer (potter), *Chocolate Pot*, c. 1909, ceramic, 11 in h. Collection of Don Fusion. Published in David Conradsen, et. al., *The Arts and Crafts of Newcomb Pottery* (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications, Inc., 2013).
125. Unknown photographer, Newcomb College Pottery salesroom, c. 1905. Newcomb Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.
126. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Frances Benjamin Johnston (right), full-length self-portrait dressed as a man with false moustache, posed with two unidentified women, one of whom is also dressed as a man*, c. 1880-1900, photographic

print. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

127. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Women Kissing*, c. 1890-1900, albumen print mounted on cabinet card. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
128. Frances Benjamin Johnston, untitled photograph of Mills Thompson, c. 1890-1910. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
129. Frances Benjamin Johnston, untitled photograph of Mills Thompson, c. 1890-1910. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
130. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Man in Blackface as Minstrel*, c. 1890-1910. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
131. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Mills Thompson, 1875-1944*, c. 1890-1910. Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

SISTERHOOD AS STRATEGY: THE COLLABORATIONS OF AMERICAN WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE GILDED AGE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation employs four case studies—illustrator Alice Barber Stephens in Philadelphia; Louisville-born sculptor Enid Yandell; photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston in Washington, D.C.; and the Newcomb College Pottery in New Orleans—to show how individual women artists from a variety of media utilized collaborative strategies to advance their professional careers. These strategies included mentoring, teaching, and sharing commissions with one another; establishing art organizations; sharing studio and living spaces; organizing and participating in all-female art exhibitions; and starting businesses to market their work. At a historical moment when expectations and ideas towards gender roles and feminine performance were shifting, these women artists negotiated these changes as well as those of a fine art world that was redefining itself in an increasingly consumer-based culture that challenged traditional definitions of the “professional” artist.

“Sisterhood as Strategy” intersects with important work in the fields of American History, Women’s and Gender Studies, and Art History. It bridges a gap between broad, cultural histories of women’s artistic production and more focused scholarly studies on women’s labor and organized womanhood. Indeed, this dissertation brings more specificity to these areas by focusing on particular artists who were highly acclaimed during their lifetime but who have since fallen through the cracks of the art historical canon and by attending to the wide array of genres and media that all artists, men and women, worked

with during the era: illustration, photography, public sculpture, and the decorative arts. By analyzing the art produced as a result of collaboration; the artists' letters, photographs, and personal papers; and contemporary mass media, particularly art journals and popular ladies' magazines, this dissertation recovers the voices of artists who served as professional role models and creates a far more diverse picture of the people and art forms that constituted early modern American visual culture.

INTRODUCTION

“A Band of Independent Partners in Talent”¹

In 1900, artists Elizabeth Shippen Green (1871-1954), Violet Oakley (1874-1961), and Jessie Willcox Smith (1863-1934) moved out of their shared apartment in the bustling art center of Philadelphia to a rented inn in the nearby suburb of Villanova. The Red Rose Inn served as both their home and studio space, and it became a hub for the artistic collaborations, shared commissions, mentoring, and lifelong friendships that contributed to their success as professional and independent artists. “Baching it,” the practice of young, single women living together, became quite common in this era and particularly benefitted women artists.² Many women shared homes and studio spaces to save resources, resulting in environments where advice, assistance, and constructive criticism flowed freely. At the Red Rose Inn, Green, Oakley, and Smith lived, worked, and exhibited together; posed for each other as models; collaborated on commissions for short story and book illustrations; and were members of the same professional organizations. The communal living and working arrangements of the three artists and Henrietta Cozens, their friend and fellow roommate who managed the household duties so that the artists could focus on their work, became a part of their artistic identities as “The Red Rose Girls,” a moniker popularized in

¹ Harrison S. Morris, “Jessie Willcox Smith,” *The Book Buyer* vol. 24(April 1902): 201.

² Jessie Trimble, “Studying and Succeeding in Art,” *New Idea Woman’s Magazine* vol. 14 (October 1906): 13.

the press. In 1902, Harrison Smith Morris (1856-1943), a prominent and influential figure in Philadelphia's art world and publishing industry, observed the close working relationship between Green, Oakley, and Smith when the women were still sharing their first apartment at 1523 Chestnut Street.³ He explained, "The kind of work with pen and brush they do, the training they have had, the aims they express, are close allied; and they live out their daily artistic lives under one roof in the gentle comradery of some Old World 'school,' a band of independent partners in talent who have no time for rivalries and who would admit none if they had."⁴

Their life at the Red Rose Inn also served as artistic inspiration for their work, such as Green's 1904 watercolor illustration, *Life Was Made of Love and Cheer* (Fig. 1). Green painted this work to accompany Henry Van Dyke's poem "Inscriptions for a Friend's House" in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, and it was from this poem that the illustration took its name.⁵ In addition to incorporating several elements that were prominent in Van Dyke's poem, including a sundial in the center of the garden and a fire burning in the hearth visible through an open door in the house, Green also depicted neighbors, friends, and family pets in an informal gathering to illustrate Van Dyke's idea of the "Friend's House."⁶ A couple

³ Morris served as the managing director of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 1893 to 1905. He was also the editor of *Lippincott's Magazine*; art editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal*; and chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the National Academy of Design. See the finding aid for the Harrison S. Morris Papers, Manuscript Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, <https://findingaids.princeton.edu/collections/C0003#summary>.

⁴ Morris, "Jessie Willcox Smith," 201.

⁵ Henry Van Dyke, "Inscriptions for a Friend's House," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* vol. 109, no. 652 (September 1904): 506-507.

⁶ For works such as this one, Green relied on photographs of friends and their children who acted as models for the artists' illustrations. Some of the people and animals in *Life Was Made of Love and Cheer*, including Prince (their Saint Bernard) and several of the cats throughout the image, can be recognized in photographs from the time that are now a part of the Jessie Willcox Smith Photograph Collection at The Library Company of Philadelphia.

relaxes on the patio in the distance while children frolic and play with a large dog and several cats in the foreground and groups of well-dressed adults congregate throughout the home's lush garden. In the center of the image, a group of four women can be seen behind a large willow tree, a clear reference to the Red Rose Girls (Fig. 2). The women are turned inward to each other, secluding themselves from the rest of the crowd at the gathering. The painting recalls an earlier photograph taken around 1901 in which Oakley and Smith stare directly out towards the viewer while Cozens and Green are turned away from the camera, maintaining a circle of privacy while we, as viewers, are allowed to observe from outside (Fig. 3). In *Life Was Made of Love and Cheer*, the four men who stand outside their circle looking on with interest further emphasize the close-knit unit that was the Red Rose Girls, a "sisterhood in art" that rejected the idea of traditional marriage and lasted for almost fifteen years.⁷

While it had traditionally been viewed as appropriately ladylike for middle- and upper-class women to have proficient skill in some sort of domestic art, the 1870s and 1880s saw a vast increase in the number of women who pursued serious careers in the arts. The Red Rose Girls provide a perfect example of the manifold ways women achieved professional success in a male-dominated art world that publicly asked, "Should women

⁷ Charlotte Herzog, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Violet Oakley, Jessie Wilcox Smith, and Elizabeth Shippen Green," *Woman's Art Journal* vol. 14, no. 2 (Autumn, 1993 – Winter, 1994): 11. Oakley and Smith first shared an apartment in Philadelphia in 1897; Green joined them soon after. Before they moved to the Red Rose Inn, Green, Oakley, Smith, and Henrietta Cozens made a vow to commit to each other by renouncing marriage. The trio lived together as a family unit until 1911, when Green married the architect Huger Elliot (1877-1948) and moved to a home nearby. Despite Green's decision to marry, the artists remained close for the rest of their lives. For more on the Red Rose Girls, see Alice A. Carter, *The Red Rose Girls: An Uncommon Story of Art and Love* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000); Thomas H. Keels, "When the Red Rose Girls Came to Cogslea," *Germantown Crier* vol. 61, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 4-18; Patt Likos, "The Ladies of the Red Rose," *The Feminist Art Journal* vol. 5 (Fall 1976): 11-15, 43; Catherine Connell Stryker, *The Studios at Cogslea* (Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Art Museum, 1976).

artists marry?”⁸ Several artists and critics attempted to answer that question, along with the related query, ‘Should a woman pursue a career in the arts at all?’ Even Howard Pyle (1853-1911), who taught and mentored a “whole school of American women illustrators” in Philadelphia (including Green, Oakley, and Smith), had doubts about the practical prospects of women artists.⁹ In 1894, the same year he began teaching illustration classes at the Drexel Institute of Arts and Sciences, Pyle wrote that pursuing a career in the arts “interferes with a girl’s social life and destroys her chances of getting married.”¹⁰ In contrast, painter Anna Lea Merritt (1844-1930) maintained that *having* a wife, not being one, would greatly aid women in their professional endeavors. In “A Letter to Artists, Especially Women Artists,” Merritt lamented that “the chief obstacle to a woman’s success is that she can never have a wife... It is exceedingly difficult to be an artist without this time-saving help.”¹¹ Through their vow to eschew marriage in favor of a lifestyle that prioritized their professional aspirations over traditional expectations of womanhood and with Cozens’ dedicated assistance, Green, Oakley, and Smith found a practical solution to the predicaments addressed by both Pyle and Merritt.

⁸ Louise Cox, “Should Woman Artists Marry?,” *The Limner* vol. 1 (May 1895): 6-7.

⁹ Helen Goodman, “Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration,” *Woman’s Art Journal* vol. 8, no. 1 (Spring – Summer, 1987): 15. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Pyle maintained, in this essay at least, that “girls are, after all, at best, only qualified for sentimental work.” Howard Pyle, “Why Art and Marriage Won’t Mix,” *The North American*, June 19, 1894, 14, printed draft in the Charlotte Harding Collection, Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.

¹¹ Anna Lea Merritt, “A Letter to Artists: Especially Women Artists,” *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* vol. 65 (March 1900): 467-469. Merritt lists the benefits that wives provided for the male artist, including keeping house and doing his laundry; maintaining his professional and personal correspondence; keeping “intruders” away from his studio so he could work without interruption; and acting as “an encouraging and partial critic.” In these areas, she notes, a husband “would be quite useless.”

While the Red Rose Girls may be the most celebrated group of women artists that engaged in “strategies of sisterhood,” their decision to work collaboratively was by no means unique. The artists I discuss in this dissertation further exemplify the varied ways that women negotiated not only the question of marriage and expectations of traditional womanhood, but also the complex status and professionalization of the American woman artist at the turn of the century. I employ three case studies—illustrator Alice Barber Stephens (1858-1932) in Philadelphia; Louisville-born sculptor Enid Yandell (1869-1934); and photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston (1864-1952) in Washington, D.C.—to show how individual women artists from a variety of media utilized collaborative strategies to advance their individual careers. They shared homes and studio spaces; mentored one another; worked together on commissions and public art projects; and established and participated in all-women’s exhibitions, professional organizations, and commercial enterprises. I begin with Stephen’s career in Philadelphia, where women were first allowed to enroll in co-educational classes at an American art institution. I then turn to Yandell, who, like many women of her generation, moved from America’s heartland to a major city in order to make her artistic career a reality. Finally, I consider Johnston, who took her promotional efforts abroad to bring awareness of American women’s artistic careers to an international audience. As a result of their personal success and their efforts to encourage women in the arts, a younger generation of women rose up in even larger numbers to permeate the art world, often in the form of entrepreneurial and educational collectives like the Newcomb College Pottery in New Orleans, Louisiana, which I discuss in the conclusion.

Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston worked in a modern society where ideas and expectations toward gender roles and feminine performance were shifting, while simultaneously navigating a complex art world that was redefining itself in an increasingly consumer-based culture that challenged traditional notions of the “professional” artist. Indeed, as art historian Sarah Burns has documented, the burgeoning media industry played an increasingly dynamic part in defining the role of the artist in the public imagination during the last decades of the nineteenth century, “help[ing] to make reputations and establish canons, rendering the artist a public, media-generated figure.”¹² The media introduced readers to the professional artist through interviews, gossip columns, art criticism, special interest pieces, and articles with illustrations and photographs of the artist at work in the studio, all of which were widely dispersed in books, magazines, journals, and newspapers. At the same time, artists responded to this rapidly modernizing world by learning how to use the media to their advantage to market their work and shape their self-image. As Burns notes, “Whether courting publicity or shunning it, the artist of the period had to confront an unavoidable fact of modern life: in addition to being a producer of aesthetic commodities, he (or she) had to become a commodity as well—a consumable personality, fodder for a curious public never satisfied for long.”¹³

¹² Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1996), 2.

¹³ Ibid., 5. Art historian J. M. Mancini expands on Burns’ assertions about the prominence of the media in the development of modern art. She adds to the art historical conversation surrounding the rise of modernism with a unique focus on those members of the art world who were *not* artists: critics, publishers, writers, and educators. It was in these fields, Mancini argues, that modernist aesthetic principles were promoted and fostered, which allowed for an artistic environment in which the avant-garde would flourish after the turn of the century. J. M. Mancini, *Pre-Modernism: Art-World Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston were born in the late nineteenth-century and studied art during the 1870s and 1880s, but their careers lasted until well into the twentieth century. They achieved considerable professional and financial success, and their work was immensely popular during this era. Despite this, the artists have received limited scholarly attention, and when they have been discussed, the biographical articles and small exhibitions and catalogs are concerned with specific episodes in the artists' careers or particular bodies of work. These different women, with their varied experiences, afford specific insights into the diverse ways that women negotiated the art world of their time. In each of the following chapters, I address the historiographies of each artist in order to situate them within the discourse on American women artists working at the turn of the century, specifically, while also drawing attention to the ways that their absence from that discourse has hindered a more nuanced examination of the American art world during this era, which was far more diverse in terms of gender, geography, and media than is commonly considered.

The cultural and social constraints placed on women artists, and the means with which women negotiated those constraints, have received scholarly attention in several important studies. Art historians and other scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that women artists took advantage of the loosening of hierarchies in art academies and organizations in the second half of the nineteenth century, but few have focused on specific women's roles in this process. In 2001, historians Laura Prieto and Kirsten Swinth separately explored how American women achieved professional success in the fine arts. Their comprehensive studies outlined the broad institutional factors that characterized women's artistic production in the nineteenth century, including their admission to

integrated art academies and life drawing classes and the formation of women's professional art organizations.¹⁴ My dissertation broadens this historical framework by considering women artists working in multiple media across the country. While Prieto and Swinth emphasize the lives of well-known painters working in major cities, including Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942), and others, I consider the experiences faced by the majority of women artists who attained professional status by working in other media, such as illustration, public sculpture, photography, and the decorative arts.

I also provide more specificity to this area of art history by showcasing how three individuals took advantage of modern womanhood, institutional changes in the art world, and various collaborative strategies to become professional artists. Whereas Swinth defends her decision to limit her study to "the highest rungs of the profession and the dominant centers of art" by arguing that the dynamics at the center framed much of what happened in the "lesser" arts on the periphery, I want to give agency to the artists that worked elsewhere, whose individual careers speak more to the experiences faced by the majority of professional artists of this period.¹⁵ The artists I discuss in this dissertation worked within established institutions and traditional gender norms while also adapting them to fit their unique needs and changing them for future generations of women artists. Of course, they were not alone in doing so, but by highlighting the varied ways that

¹⁴ Laura R. Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001); Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). See also April F. Masten, *Art Work: Women Artists and Democracy in Mid-Nineteenth-Century New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 10. It should be noted that Prieto's book works in this same way, with a focus on "exceptional" artists whose success "is evidence of their own deviance from 'normal' womanhood." Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 4.

Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston, specifically, accomplished these things, I avoid the oversimplification that can happen when discussing women artists more generally. In doing so, this dissertation recovers the voices of artists who served as professional role models to many women in the era and resurrects these specific women as active participants in the creation of early modern American visual culture.

There have also been a number of books, scholarly articles, and exhibitions related to the ways that artists work together, whether through partnerships and friendships or through more intentionally organized artistic communities. Much of this scholarship focuses on the relationships between artists working primarily in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, or on more formally-organized collaborations, collectives, and guilds predicated on promoting specific ideals.¹⁶ There has also long been an interest among scholars of multiple disciplines in the romantic nature of artists' partnerships, or, by extension, the woman artist's role as muse.¹⁷ But, not all forms of artistic collaboration and networking are marked by the formal cohesion that characterizes the kinds of partnerships,

¹⁶ See, for instance, Eva Díaz, *The Experimenters: Chance and Design at Black Mountain College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Vivien Greene, *Utopia Matters: From Brotherhoods to Bauhaus* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2010); Kristine Stiles, ed., *Correspondence Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and Her Circle* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010); Kirsten Swenson, *Irrational Judgments: Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, and 1960s New York* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2016). Scholarship on modernist artist groups, including the Abstract Expressionists, has until recently isolated women and people of color from that narrative. As Ann Gibson has observed, "this does not mean that their work was unknown, with the implication that if it had been known it would have been appreciated. Their work *was* available... The work and the artists were there to be seen, but somehow they had been discounted." Ann Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 4.

¹⁷ Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle De Courtivron, eds., *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996); Izabella Penier and Anna Suwalska-Kołecka, eds., *Muses, Mistresses, and Mates: Creative Collaborations in Literature, Art, and Life* (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015). Penier and Suwalska-Kołecka cite "the ambience of compulsive heterosexuality that dominated previous centuries" as one explanation for the lack of scholarship on women's creative collaborations. Penier and Suwalska-Kołecka, *Muses, Mistresses, and Mates*, 7.

collectives, schools, and projects that much of the aforementioned scholarship highlights. Many artists rely on assistants in their studios or on dealers to make their work known to the public; sculptors rely on foundries and assistants to see their large-scale projects through; and illustrators and photographers work with editors, writers, and publishers to ensure their work is viewed by a mass audience. Indeed, it is not often that an artwork is the result of a single person's effort.

However, these kinds of informal collaborative efforts are often overlooked in art historical scholarship in favor of a narrative that promotes a model of creativity based on the idea of the single artistic genius. Independent curator and writer Debra Bricker Balken has noted that, "measured by a set of standards which presupposes art is a pure enterprise, something that is the outcome of isolation and solitary thinking, collaborative projects have confounded our received notions of art."¹⁸ The impulse to glorify the artistic genius is not a model reserved for artists working in the nineteenth century through the present day. In her study of women artists in early modern Spanish workshops, Casey Gardonio-Goat observes that, "public emphasis on the head of a workshop tended to mask collaboration with assistants, male or female," the consequences of which we still see today in the lack of known women artists from this period and, perhaps more visibly, in museum labels that read, 'The School of [insert master painter or sculptor here].'¹⁹

I would like to suggest that instead of turning to models of art history that privilege this idea of the lone artistic genius, scholars could benefit by looking to histories of art and craft production amongst women. In particular, the work done on the female networks

¹⁸ Debra Bricker Balken, "Interactions between Artists and Writers," *Art Journal* vol. 52, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 16.

¹⁹ Casey Gardonio-Foat, "Daughters of Seville: Workshops and Women Artists in Early Modern Andalucía," *Woman's Art Journal* vol. 31, no. 1 (Spring / Summer 2010): 23.

fostered in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century quilting circles provide a model of art historical scholarship that helps us to better understand how female networks and the events, organizations, and relationships that resulted from such networks functioned as “invaluable agents of cultural cohesion and group identity.”²⁰ The artists featured in this dissertation were not gathering together to promote a specific artistic style or a shared ideology about the purpose and function of art. Instead, they came together in order to prove that women *could* be artists. By participating in various kinds of strategic sisterhood—through organizing, collaborating, and sharing their resources with one another—women artists like Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston ensured not only that a space was made available for women within the art world, but that with the help and support of their female colleagues, women could flourish in those positions.

Another key aspect of this study examines the social and visual construction of the so-called New Woman as she was manifested in American culture. As historian and women’s studies scholar Tracey Jean Boisseau has noted, the term New Woman first emerged in Britain in the mid-1890s as “a derogatory label for middle-class women who seemed to violate the doctrine of ‘separate spheres.’” Middle-class women who aspired to professionalism, engaged in athleticism, critiqued the institution of marriage, decried the sexual double-standard, or eschewed confining clothing on semi-political grounds were

²⁰ Pat Ferrero, Elaine Hedges, and Julie Silber, *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women and Quilts on American Society* (San Francisco, California: Quilt Digest Press, 1987), 48. See also Bettina Aptheker, *Tapestries of Life: Women’s Work, Women’s Consciousness and the Meaning of Daily Experiences* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989); Elsa Barkley Brown, “African-American Women’s Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women’s History,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 14, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 921-929; Floris Barnett Cash, “Kinship and Quilting: An Examination of an African-American Tradition,” *Journal of Negro History* vol. 80, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 32.

vulnerable to the charge of being ‘new women’.”²¹ This New Woman, as art historian Ellen Wiley Todd explains, “had a college education, campaigned for the vote, became a social worker in the spirit of Progressive Era reform, and frequently remained single.”²² The women I discuss in this dissertation conformed to this idea of New Womanhood in that they were white, middle- to upper-class women with the economic means and personal ambition to support themselves through their artistic work. The New Woman status was not accorded to women of color or lower-class women, and these women are noticeably absent in my examination of the American woman artist.²³ The strategic sisterhood that I describe, the sisterhood that Stephens, Yandell, Johnston, and their peers participated in, was an extremely limited one that was open only to women that fit within the ideal racial and class constraints. Their sisterhood was strategic not only because it helped them to navigate complex issues surrounding their gender, but because it also deliberately chose to empower a specifically *white* womanhood.²⁴ By keeping within the confines of proper womanhood, for the most part, Stephens, Yandell, Johnston, and their colleagues were able to take on professional roles while circumventing larger cultural anxieties about

²¹ Tracey Jean Boisseau, “‘Where Every Woman May be a Queen’: Gender, Politics, and Visual Space at the Chicago World’s Fair, 1893,” in *Space in America: Theory, History, and Culture*, ed. Klaus Benesch and Kerstin Schmidt (New York: Rodopi Press, 2005), 285.

²² Ellen Wiley Todd, *The “New Woman” Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993), xxvii.

²³ In many cases, women of the uppermost classes were also discouraged from participating in activities taken up by New Women that were considered unbecoming for a woman of that station, such as paid work. While it was considered necessary for aristocratic women to have philanthropic and creative outlets, it was also widely deemed improper for a woman to be *too* ambitious in these arenas.

²⁴ There are exceptions where women of color were accepted into elite professional organizations and exhibitions. One example is Angel DeCora (Hinook-Mahiwi-Kalinaka), a Winnebago painter and illustrator. DeCora studied art at Smith College, the Drexel Institute, and Cowles Art School in Boston, exhibited widely, and “belonged to the most conventional art circles.” Unfortunately, these exceptions were few and far between. Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 140-141. For more on DeCora, see Elizabeth Hutchinson, “Modern Native American Art: Angel De Cora’s Transcultural Aesthetics,” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 83, no. 4 (December 2001): 740-756.

immigration, purity, and whiteness that came along with working in an increasingly industrialized Post-Reconstruction America.

Feminist scholars and art historians alike have complicated our modern understanding of the New Woman ideal.²⁵ Nevertheless, when scholars consider the New Woman of the late nineteenth century, she has often remained the kind of static, idealized figure embodied by Charles Dana Gibson's infamous *Gibson Girl*, a young lady in direct contrast with the passive, genteel Victorian women that came before her.²⁶ What I have found throughout my research on Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston is that the category of the New Woman was in fact much more fluid, even early on in its construction.²⁷ While most historians would agree that each of these women would have been considered to be 'new' during their own lifetimes, Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston lived very different lives, as the following chapters indicate. For example, as I show in Chapter One, Stephens' version of the New Woman diverged from than the New Woman represented and personified by her younger students, including Charlotte Harding (1873-1951). Being a

²⁵ For instance, Todd has maintained that "any discussion of new womanhood and its representations must emphasize the historical and ideological complexity of both. At any given historical moment new womanhood encompasses contradictory discourses on gender difference related to sexuality, motherhood, work, the family, feminism, femininity, and masculinity... New womanhood is thus one site of the continuous production, definition, and redefinition of women's roles and women's behavior... The phrase "new womanhood" can be shown to reproduce or challenge dominant ideologies, depending on when, how, by whom, and in whose interests the term is used and to what ends." Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised*, xxviii. See also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936," in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 245-296.

²⁶ Caroline Ticknor juxtaposed these two versions of womanhood in a 1901 essay that relied on some of the same caricatures that remain in the public imagination today. Caroline Ticknor, "The Steel-Engraving Lady and the Gibson Girls," *The Atlantic Monthly* vol. 88, no. 525 (July 1901): 105-108.

²⁷ Like Todd, I use the word "construct" intentionally here in order to reiterate that sexual identity and ideas about gender, including the idea of the New Woman, are not fixed, but instead are socially and culturally constructed and change over time. *Ibid.*, xxvi.

New Woman in the nineteenth century did not mean one could not also be happily married or a loving mother. It was possible to do both, and many women did.

This dissertation also emphasizes the important role that popular media played in promoting the work of women artists and in popularizing the idea of the woman artist as a serious professional. For example, portraits of the Red Rose Girls and other artists, including Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston, were widely published in newspapers and popular magazines like *The Ladies' Home Journal* (for example, see Figs. 4, 15-16). Photographs and engravings of the woman artist at work, such as the 1896 photograph of Yandell in the process of sculpting the colossal *Pallas Athena*, served as visual evidence that art was labor, and success was hard-achieved (see 35-36, 40). Images such as these, as art historian Patricia Smith Scanlan has noted, also served as examples for other American women, defining the artists as “serious professionals and excellent models of the discipline and determination necessary for success.”²⁸ The articles that accompanied such photographs provided readers with details of the artists’ work, their personal and academic background, and interviews with the artists themselves, which gave readers insight into the lives of real women artists.

The artists in this study were widely represented in ladies’ magazines, art journals, and local and international newspapers—and not only as artists. While they were commonly featured as the subjects of articles and illustrations, Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston each wrote essays of their own that extolled the benefits of a career in the arts for American women. Just as women artists shaped their professional and public persona

²⁸ Patricia Smith Scanlan, ““God-gifted Girls’: Women Illustrators, Gender, Class, and Commerce in American Visual Culture, 1885-1925” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2010), 71.

through their self-image, they also constructed a positive and encouraging narrative of their work and the work of their colleagues through their written publications. In this dissertation, I treat the essays and newspaper articles by Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston as part and parcel of, not separate from, their artistic vision and creative output. In sum, these artists were responsible for not only making art objects, but for cultivating a community of women artists through their both art and their words.

This dissertation calls upon methodologies from art history, gender studies, and American history. My title, “Sisterhood as Strategy,” relies on a term that has often been employed by art historians, including Tamar Garb and, most recently, Melissa Dabakis.²⁹ The concept of sisterhood as a historical framework has most often been utilized by historians and women’s studies scholars to characterize the activism of the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Though the term is at best idealistic, considering the racial and class barriers that have prohibited (and continue to prevent) women of color and working-class women from fully participating in prominent professional art circles, archival evidence and contemporary literature shows that a sisterhood of artists is what many women ascribed to and aspired to in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My dissertation analyzes these particular women’s lives, careers, and art work through a conceptual framework of sisterhood that has been documented extensively by feminist scholars and historians who have found that American women in the nineteenth century worked together in many fields, developing networks that

²⁹ Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women’s Artistic Culture in Late-Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994); Melissa Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors: American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).

were “based on cooperation and familialism rather than on competition and individualism.”³⁰ This kind of scholarship has, as Scanlan has noted, “reframed views of women ‘as passive victims’ to women as active agents in their own lives.”³¹ In her study on Philadelphia women illustrators, that those artists “constructed invaluable networks of social and professional support” which enabled them to take “charge of their own lives and realiz[e] their professional ambitions.”³²

My dissertation extends Scanlan’s findings to show that this women’s culture was much broader. Collaboration amongst women artists crossed artificial boundaries between geography and media and permeated women’s involvement in the American art world (it did this at home in the United States, and, as Dabakis, Garb, and others have shown, abroad in Paris and Rome as well). In 1905, Grace Alexander Fowler attested to this culture of sisterhood among women artists in an article in which she observed, “They live in a little world of their own which is bound on all sides by a love for art and an enthusiasm and determination which laugh at discouragements.”³³ Though Fowler was referring specifically to New York-based women artists, this atmosphere of congeniality, encouragement, love, and support was prevalent in women’s studios, homes, art academies, professional clubs, and exhibition spaces across the United States. Furthermore, by using sisterhood as a conceptual framework through which to investigate the collaborative strategies employed by women artists at a time when women organized for political and social recognition in larger numbers than ever before, this dissertation elucidates how

³⁰ See Ava Baron, “Gender and Labor History,” in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 9-16.

³¹ Scanlan, “‘God-gifted Girls’,” 53, note 127.

³² Scanlan, “‘God-gifted Girls’,” 53.

³³ Grace Alexander Fowler, “Studio Life Among Women Artists,” *Harper’s Bazaar* vol. 39, no. 3 (March 1905): 217.

women in the art world worked together to take advantage of this particular historical moment. This model of sisterhood was far more widespread than single artists; it permeated the popular press in a mass culture that was national, if not international, in scope.

In addition to American art history, this dissertation intersects with important work in the fields of American history and women's and gender studies. While it acts in one way as a recovery project for a few understudied and under acknowledged women artists who had considerable influence in their own time, "Sisterhood as Strategy" also bridges a gap between cultural studies of women's artistic production and historical accounts of women's labor and organized womanhood more broadly, thereby adding to the dialogue begun by scholars such as Karen J. Blair, Nancy Cott, Alice Kessler-Harris, Anne Firor Scott, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, among others.³⁴ Much of the scholarship on women in the workforce focuses on factory workers, domestic servants, office work, and other jobs that qualified as "wage labor." Art as an occupation has traditionally been romanticized as something higher than work, as an elevated kind of intellectual and creative labor requiring a unique set of talents. However, most women artists of this period entered into the art profession with the practical motivation of supporting themselves financially. Their

³⁴ Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), and idem, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994); Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Anne Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984) and idem, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991); and Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*. For more on women as wage earners in the nineteenth century, see Mary H. Blewett, *We Will Rise in Our Might: Workingwomen's Voices from Nineteenth-Century New England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991) and Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

writings and other archival sources prove these artists viewed their work as a form of labor that was in line with other occupations, including domestic work and commercial jobs, a view which differs from the more romanticized version of artistic production furthered by modernist art historians.³⁵ Art academies in the nineteenth century promoted the idea of art education as preparation for earning a living. For example, at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), the mission was “to train professional artists who intended to earn a living through the production of art.”³⁶ At the nearby Drexel Institute, the School of Illustration operated with the goal of offering training in art “not according to the limited canons of the salon, but for the more rough and ready judgment of the public at large.”³⁷ Again, in this instance, artists like Beaux, Cassatt, and Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) are the anomaly, while women like Stephens, Yandell, and even Johnston, who came from an upper-class family that had the means of providing for her through adulthood, are more representative of the average professional woman artist in America at this time.

To show how widespread the use of strategic sisterhood was at the turn of the twentieth century, this dissertation relies on archival resources, such as the artists’ professional correspondence, personal papers, and photographs; contemporary literature, magazines, and newspapers; and visual analysis of the works of art produced as a result of artistic collaboration. In order to resituate Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston within the

³⁵ On sculpture as a form of women’s work, see “Janet Scudder Tells Why So Few Women Are Sculptors,” *The New York Times*, February 18, 1912, SM13, and Bessie Potter Vonnoh, “What I am Trying to Do,” transcript of a March 1931 radio talk. Quoted in Julie Aronson, *Bessie Potter Vonnoh: Sculptor of Women* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press and the Cincinnati Art Museum, 2008), 11.

³⁶ As art historian Elizabeth Johns has observed, at PAFA, “commercial artists, including illustrators, were welcomed in the pursuit of ‘pure art education’.” Elizabeth Johns, “Thomas Eakins and ‘Pure Art’ Education,” *Archives of American Art Journal* vol. 23 (1983): 2.

³⁷ Edward D. McDonald and Edward M. Hinton, *Drexel Institute of Technology, 1891-1941: A Memorial History* (Philadelphia: Drexel Institute, 1942), 128.

context of American artistic production at the turn of the century and fully understand their influence and significance, I pay special attention to how their work was written about in art journals and the press more broadly, particularly the ladies' magazines and local newspapers that were dispersed to a broad American public outside the major city centers. This study takes seriously the experiences faced by women artists as put forth in the popular media during their own time, including their interviews, editorials, photographs, and artworks, as well as the potential influence this public exposure of their lives had on readers of the time.

In this effort to reintroduce these relatively understudied artists into the art historical canon, the artists' personal papers are invaluable.³⁸ For example, in Chapter Two I closely examine Yandell's scrapbooks, which contain photographs, personal notes, magazine and newspaper articles related to Yandell's career, and clippings she saved from art journals and periodicals that served as inspiration for her sculptures. These archival resources, combined with published interviews and first-hand accounts, including Yandell's own editorials and *Three Girls in a Flat*, the novel Yandell co-wrote with her roommates while living in Chicago, are especially important in understanding how Yandell personally experienced this unique moment as an unmarried woman and professional sculptor. Contemporary photographs reveal more about the artistic circles she worked

³⁸ Stephens and Yandell left very little in terms of first-hand accounts, which has left historians to rely mostly on their professional correspondence and contemporary news articles, exhibition reviews, and interviews to reconstruct the details of their personal lives and careers. Many letters from Yandell's mother survive, which are now located in The Filson Historical Society, though, unfortunately, there are very few surviving pieces of correspondence written by Yandell. As historian Nancy Baird has documented, letters that Yandell sent to her family in Louisville were "forwarded to Nashville for her grandmother's enjoyment." These letters are presumed to have been purposefully burned by the Elliston family during a cleaning of their estate in the 1920s. Nancy Disher Baird, "Enid Yandell: Kentucky Sculptor," *Filson Club History Quarterly* vol. 62 (January 1988): 6.

within, as do the written accounts of her colleagues and peers, including Bessie Potter Vonnoh (1872-1955) and Janet Scudder (1869-1940), both of whom documented their personal recollections in memoirs and personal essays. While these unique sources have been mentioned by previous scholars, they have yet to be seriously considered alongside Yandell's work. Combined with visual analysis of these artists' work alongside that of their female peers, these types of primary sources allow for a more accurate and nuanced understanding of how women artists utilized various collaborative strategies of sisterhood to establish successful careers and, more generally, what it was like to be a professional woman artist at the turn of the century.

This dissertation examines the lives and work of three women artists who worked in different urban areas across the country, from Washington, D.C, and Philadelphia on the East Coast, to the Southern cities of Louisville, which was a hub of trade activity on the Ohio River during this era, and New Orleans, a bustling port city on the Gulf Coast. Some of America's best-known women artists from this period, including Cassatt, Morisot, Beaux, and Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908), attained their success abroad in the art centers of Paris and Rome. However, I have made it a point to consider women who forged their careers primarily in the United States. Though American artists (and art consumers) viewed studying abroad as an integral step towards professionalization, the majority of American women artists experienced professional and financial success at home, where art instruction was more equal and the attitude towards working women was relatively more accepting and accommodating. By maintaining an emphasis on artists who lived and

worked primarily in the United States, my dissertation speaks to the more prevalent experiences of American women artists.

Furthermore, the broad geographic range of my subjects shows that collaboration amongst women crossed state and regional borders, and that smaller cities like Louisville and New Orleans were areas of rich artistic production. Even Johnston, who lived and worked for over a decade in New York City, corresponded with and promoted the work of women from places as far away as Birmingham, Alabama. While there has been significant scholarly work done in the field of American history on the lives and contributions of Southern women throughout the country's history, the American art historical canon remains biased towards those artists who lived and worked in the North and along the East Coast.³⁹ Under this center/periphery model, in which artists working outside of major metropolitan areas of influence are understood as backwards, lacking, and/or mere imitators of those working in the center, historians risk overlooking the reality of how ideas and styles were shared and the cross-cultural exchanges that took place between artists, critics, and audiences that traversed geographical boundaries.⁴⁰ In broadening the scope of

³⁹ Furthermore, when that scholarly work is done, Southern women are often viewed a distinct group separate from women in other regions of the country and the world. In reality—and Yandell's life and career is a clear example—Southern women, particularly those who had professional careers, moved about the country and the world just as readily as their counterparts in the North, taking with them their unique perspectives and sharing their work, ideas, and experiences with their colleagues.

⁴⁰ The center/periphery approach is often used to understand modern and contemporary art on a global scale, with the center situated firmly in the art centers of the West (New York, Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna). According to art historian Piotr Piotrowski, in this “vertical” narrative of art history, “the art of the center determines a specific paradigm, while the art of the periphery is supposed to adopt the models established in the centers. The center provides the canons, hierarchy of values, and stylistic norms—it is the role of the periphery to adopt them in the process of reception. It may happen, of course, that the periphery has its own outstanding artists, but their recognition, or art historical consecration, depends on the center: on exhibitions organized in the West and books published in Western countries.” Piotr Piotrowski, “Toward a Horizontal History of the Art of the European Avant-Garde,” in *European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies*, ed. Sascha Bru and Peter Nicholls (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 51. For more

previous studies to include women who lived outside the metropolitan areas in the northeastern United States, this dissertation draws much-needed attention to the unique circumstances faced by women artists from regions seen by many as backwards and restrictive towards women's advancement in the public and professional spheres.

In maintaining a focus on artists who were not exclusively painters (though all three women I discuss also either trained as painters or exhibited their paintings in addition to their work in illustration, sculpture, and photography), I underscore an era in which the arts were part and parcel of public and commercial culture. Popular illustration and art photography were relatively new artistic endeavors in the late nineteenth century, and sculpture, with its reliance on often difficult manual labor, was hardly embraced as an appropriate creative outlet for women. The resulting artworks were often produced for a large consumer base. Stephens' illustrations and Johnston's photographs were distributed through the mass media in newspapers, magazines, and books, while Yandell's monuments were intended for public spaces and her table-top and garden sculptures were mass-produced and sold in department stores or through catalogs. Unlike their painter peers, whose work could be viewed almost exclusively in galleries, museums, or, when available, World's Fairs, the majority of Stephens', Yandell's, and Johnston's art was most often viewed and appreciated within the context of the private home.

Thus, a thread that runs throughout each of the three chapters is the unnecessary hierarchy of media that was perpetuated by contemporary artists, critics, and museum

on the center/periphery model, see Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, "The Uses and Abuses of Peripheries in Art History," *Artl@s Bulletin* vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 4-7; Nelly Richard, "Postmodern Disalignments and Realignments of the Center/Periphery," *Art Journal* vol. 51, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 57-59; Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem," *Artforum* vol. 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 54-59.

professionals as well as by later art historians and scholars. Traditionally, painting and sculpture have been viewed and promoted as “high” art, while other artistic avenues, including illustration, water color painting, embroidery and other textiles, ceramics, and even photography, were deemed to be craft, or “low” art, because it was thought that these specialties required little training, or were more physical or mechanical than intellectual.⁴¹ Perhaps not surprisingly, these artistic outlets are also those that are most often associated with women’s creative production. This association is not arbitrary.⁴² For centuries, women were prohibited from attending art academies or having apprenticeships and were therefore unable to receive the traditional art education that would enable them to succeed or even participate in the “high” art world. As a result, women were relegated to these kinds of crafts that often also served utilitarian purposes (for example, textiles being used in the home). Women’s exclusion from the professional art world, as Linda Nochlin and other art historians have repeatedly shown, has been the result of deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about women’s roles in society and the subsequent systemic inequity that manifested in academia.⁴³ However, as the case studies in this dissertation indicate, far from the hierarchy of media celebrated by the academies and, later, the modern art establishment, this era

⁴¹ For more on the hierarchicalization of art, see Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, eds., *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990). See also Michele H. Bogart’s bibliography on the debate over cultural hierarchies in Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 303-304.

⁴² Feminist scholars have challenged modern art history’s preoccupation with the categories of “high” and “low” and have pointed out how it has resulted in the marginalization of women artists. See, for instance, Lisa Tickner, “Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference,” *Genders* vol 1, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 93-98.

⁴³ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 145-178, originally published in *Art News* vol. 69, no. 9 (January 1971): 22-39. In this groundbreaking essay, Nochlin argues that it is “our institutions and our education – education understood to include everything that happens to us from the moment we enter this world of meaningful symbols, signs, and signals” that has prevented women from achieving success in the arts at the level of the “great” masters like Michelangelo or Rembrandt.

witnessed a far more fluid definition of art.

One reason that the divide between the so-called “high” and “low” arts was not as solidified in the nineteenth century as scholars see it today is because many artists practiced a variety of media. It is important to keep in mind that, as art historian Michele Bogart has elucidated, the professional painter often stepped outside his or her chosen medium to work in more “popular” modes of artistic production in order to support themselves financially, including illustration, photography, and the commercial and public arts more broadly.⁴⁴ Stephens, who began her career with ambitions of becoming a portrait painter, then supported herself financially through her academic training by working as an engraver before becoming a professional illustrator, advised young artists to “work in all mediums.”⁴⁵ Yandell also painted throughout her life, even as she made her reputation through her sculptural work. Johnston, who found success as a photographer, went abroad to train as an illustrator and also dabbled in poster design throughout her career. Art exhibitions were equally varied. For example, The Plastic Club routinely featured exhibitions that showcased multiple media, including prints, drawings, paintings, sketches, lithographs, and photography.

Another reason that the hierarchy of media is imaginary and restrictive is because artists who specialized in these so-called lesser arts viewed themselves as fine artists, and their work was also viewed by others as fine art. For instance, both men and women

⁴⁴ Bogart argues that the new commercial modes of patronage, including magazine and book illustration, print advertising, poster design, and photography, “offered artists the opportunity to achieve much greater visibility and influence. Not least appealing was the fact that these enterprises offered artists the possibility of earning real money.” Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 6.

⁴⁵ Alice Barber Stephens, “The Art of Illustrating,” *Woman’s Progress in Literature, Science, Art, Education and Politics* vol. 2, no. 2 (November 1893): 54.

illustrators considered themselves artists at the same level as painters and sculptors. Artists and critics alike advocated for the art of illustration and its place among the fine arts. It was not seen then as a purely commercial endeavor. As Scanlan has noted, Pyle “elevated the art of illustration to a new level during his years at Drexel [Institute], believing that ‘[i]llustrative art is *the* art of the day.’”⁴⁶ Likewise, Green, Oakley, Smith, and their contemporaries believed illustration had its place “among the fine arts” and rebuked those who saw it merely as a commercial art, “as if that were its only end and aim.”⁴⁷ Photographers were the same in this regard, fighting to elevate what some saw as a scientific or mechanical endeavor to one that was viewed as a fine art. Furthermore, these minor arts had a significant influence on the styles and trends in painting and sculpture at the turn of the twentieth century, at the height of the age of mass production. The processes of modernization, which included mass production, mass media, and commercialization, have always been part and parcel of the modernization of the art world.

Chapter One centers around Stephens, an influential figure in the Philadelphia art world who worked as an illustrator, mentor, teacher, and co-founder of the first women’s professional art organization in the city, The Plastic Club. As a student, Stephens worked with her peers to petition against unfair policies at PAFA and, while there, used her artistic talents to capture the collectivism and camaraderie that characterized the women’s art classes at the Academy. As a professional, Stephens taught and mentored other young

⁴⁶ Scanlan, ““God-gifted Girls’,” 44. Quote from Bertha Corson Day’s personal notes from Howard Pyle’s Illustration Class at the Drexel Institute, 1894, box 2, Bertha Corson Day Bates Collection, Delaware Art Museum.

⁴⁷ Letter from Elizabeth Shippen Green to Thornton Oakley, July 12, 1947, Thornton Oakley Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

women in the field through her public lectures and published editorials. In addition to her administrative work with The Plastic Club, she also organized and participated in all-women's art exhibitions. While living in Philadelphia, Stephens rented a studio space with her student, Charlotte Harding, where they shared advice and critiqued one another's work and posed for each other as models. The resulting sketches, photographs, paintings, and illustrations spoke to the experiences faced by women artists and were reproduced in popular magazines, giving readers rare and intimate insights into their personal and professional lives. The work that Stephens and Harding produced during their time together, and the attention their collaborative methods received in the popular press, is evidence of the significant influence that these collaborative tactics had on their individual styles and ultimate success. This chapter analyzes how Stephens' use of collaborative strategies influenced her career and her work, which often corresponded with her personal experiences as a New Woman, a woman artist, and a leader in her field.

Chapter Two focuses on Yandell, a sculptor who created a name for herself through her contributions to numerous World's Fairs and the International Exhibition of Modern Art at the Armory in 1913, popularly known as the "Armory Show." While working on her own sculptural projects for the Woman's Building and the Kentucky State Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, Yandell also assisted sculptor Lorado Taft in his studio as a member of a group of women sculptors known as the White Rabbits. While in Chicago, Yandell shared a home with two other women, with whom she co-wrote and published *Three Girls in a Flat*, an illustrated novel inspired by their experiences as young, aspiring professionals in the city that later served as a primer to younger artists. As a result of the connections she made while working in Chicago, Yandell continued to pursue large

public commissions, both at home in Kentucky and across the country. She became the first woman to be admitted into the National Sculpture Society and, in 1908, she founded the Branstock School where she taught and mentored other women artists until her death in 1934. This chapter uncovers how one independent, Southern woman created an international reputation by establishing a network of professional connections across the country, while simultaneously working with, mentoring, and teaching other women artists who sought to do the same. It also provides a much-needed analysis of several of Yandell's sculptural projects, from her monumental World's Fair sculptures to the decorative parlor pieces and garden statuary she designed for private consumption, both of which consistently spoke to and for women's experience.

The third chapter examines Johnston's photography career, professional relationships, and curatorial and written work to further emphasize how women artists relied upon personal and professional connections, all-women's exhibitions, and the mass media as a means of advancing their careers. While best-known for her work as a prominent portrait photographer, photojournalist, and, later in life, an architectural photographer, Johnston also worked tirelessly in Washington, D.C., and abroad to help promote the careers of other women photographers. In addition to organizing the very first international exhibition showcasing American women photographers, Johnston served as a mentor to women across the country through public lectures and letter-writing correspondence. Johnston, a self-proclaimed and unapologetic New Woman, also made use of the press to promote her cause. Not only was she often featured in popular magazines such as *The Ladies' Home Journal*, but she also published editorials and essays endorsing the work of her colleagues and encouraging aspiring artists. As a result, Johnston became a role model

for a generation of women artists who nurtured their professional desires in a culture that had previously limited them to domestic roles.

In the Conclusion, I address the idea of organized womanhood through an examination of the Newcomb College Pottery, an educational and commercial enterprise that was part of the all-women's Newcomb Art School at Tulane University from 1894 to 1940. The Pottery operated with the mutually reinforcing goals of instructing women in the decorative arts and enabling them to earn an income through the sale of their pottery, jewelry, textiles, and other crafts. The students employed at the Pottery went on to establish professional networks and pursue careers as artists, teachers, designers, and more. An examination of the Newcomb College Pottery proves how collaboration continued to influence women's artistic production throughout the early twentieth century. Some historians have suggested that women artists' dependency upon collaborative outlets such as women's-only professional organizations waned with the onset of modernism and the rise of the suffragist movement after the turn of the century.⁴⁸ Despite modernism's emphasis on individualism and the assertion by many suffragists that women are equal to, not different from, their male counterparts, collaboration between women artists did not end in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁹ The artists discussed in this study

⁴⁸ Prieto argues, for example, that the "ethos [of modernism] swept away a century of struggle by women for professional recognition and institutional inclusion, and it simultaneously made that struggle seem unnecessary. European training, life classes, studio space, membership in professional organizations, all tumbled into a minor place of importance relative to individual self-expression... The rising generation increasingly rejected a collective identity as women." Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 186, 207.

⁴⁹ After women won the right to vote in 1920, some women (and men) "shied away from the collective demands of feminist political reform in favor of an individualized feminism." During this period, feminists "debated notions of equality versus difference and woman-centered versus heterosexual ideals." Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised*, xxvii. See also Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).

continued to work collaboratively well into the twentieth century, often mentoring younger women in their respective fields until the end of their lives, which shows that the next generation of artists still very much depended on mentoring and building professional relationships with established women artists. Women artists continued to support one another throughout the twentieth century through sharing spaces, mentoring and teaching, and participating in all-women's organizations, exhibitions, and commercial enterprises, even as they continued to find more outlets for their art in other, largely male-dominated arenas.

CHAPTER ONE

Alice Barber Stephens, the “Leader of Her Class”: Creating a Space for Women Artists in Philadelphia⁵⁰

Alice Barber Stephens built a career in Philadelphia as an accomplished illustrator and art teacher (Fig. 4). In doing so, she directly benefitted from changes that took place in the American art world in the late nineteenth century, including women’s admission to art academies and life drawing classes. Until the 1870s, professions in the arts were largely out of reach for women because they were prohibited by institutional power bases, including art academies, museums, and professional organizations, from formally attaining the skills, qualifications, and professional connections needed for success.⁵¹ Furthermore, women’s presumed roles as the primary caretakers of domestic life also physically limited their participation in the broader social sphere. As these social prescriptions slowly changed, women like Stephens started to enter all areas of the professional sphere, including the art world. This chapter argues that Stephens played a crucial part in the development of a new American art world, a world that began to acknowledge, if not entirely accept, women’s active participation.

To accomplish her goals, Stephens relied strongly upon collaborative strategies of sisterhood that helped her and her peers negotiate the new role of the professional woman

⁵⁰ Julius Moritzen, “Some Women Illustrators—Alice Barber Stephens,” *The Twentieth-Century Home* vol. 2, no. 5 (December 1904): 45.

⁵¹ Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, 150.

artist. She worked with fellow students to petition against the restrictive policies at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts that limited their access to equal art education; taught and mentored other young women in the field; led efforts to establish the first professional women's art organization in the city; organized and participated in all-women's art exhibitions; and gave public lectures and published editorials on ways to succeed as an illustrator. In addition to her significant service as a teacher, mentor, friend, and writer, Stephens' illustrative work often corresponded with her own personal experiences as a New Woman. These images provided readers with insight into the personal and professional lives of working women and reflected the complex challenges that middle-class women like Stephens faced, which included balancing traditional expectations of womanhood within a quickly changing society.

Several factors coalesced to allow for Stephens' rise to prominence in the Philadelphia art world, including the many advancements in education for women art students in that city and its role as the leading producer of mass media during what has become known as the "Golden Age of American Illustration."⁵² Indeed, Philadelphia, the

⁵² Illustration played a crucial role in the rise of mass media and visual culture that came to characterize modern American society at the turn of the twentieth century. Though these dates have been debated, art historians typically refer to the period between 1880 and 1930 as the "Golden Age of American Illustration." Many factors contributed to this so-called "Golden Age," including numerous advances in printing technology that began as early as the 1870s with the perfection of the halftone technique, which allowed for cheaper, quicker, and more accurate reproductions of the artists' original work. A reduction in the cost of paper in the 1880s and the introduction of color reproduction in 1892 also contributed to the enriched quality and increased output of large publications. These advancements allowed popular magazines and periodicals to drop their cover prices, resulting in larger readership and an ever-growing need for more illustrators. Between 1885 and 1905 alone, artists produced at least 100,000 illustrations a year for almost 11,000 different periodicals. This increase of printed illustration combined with a growing, and increasingly literate, middle class that was willing and able to spend time and money on entertainment. For more on the Golden Age of American Illustration, see Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 18-26; Rowland R. Elzea, *The Best of American Illustration: Selections from the Delaware Art Museum* (Washington, D.C.: The Trust for Museum Exhibitions, 1985), and idem, *The Golden Age of American Illustration, 1880-1914*

heart of American art in the second half of the nineteenth century, became a city where women illustrators could thrive in a way that was impossible elsewhere. In addition to being home to some of the most prestigious art institutions in the country, Philadelphia also hosted many of the most prominent illustrators and major publishing houses of the day, not to mention a bustling art community that provided artists in all media with opportunities to network and exhibit their art.⁵³ However, despite her considerable achievements as a professional artist, Stephens is largely absent from American art scholarship. In general, women illustrators have been left out of modern accounts of American art history, including many of the now-canonical texts devoted to women artists, which tend to emphasize the careers of artists working in what were considered the ‘high’ arts of painting and sculpture.⁵⁴ This oversight has resulted in a historical narrative that ignores the many women artists who became household names during their own lifetimes because of their illustrative work. Furthermore, by prioritizing painting and sculpture as the ultimate forms of artistic expression, art historians have neglected to acknowledge the diversity that characterized most professional artists’ production during this period.⁵⁵

(Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Art Museum, 1972); Jo Ann Early Levin, “The Golden Age of American Illustration: Popular Art in American Magazines, 1850-1925” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1980).

⁵³ Scanlan elaborates on the importance of Philadelphia as a center for illustration. See Scanlan, “‘God-gifted Girls’,” 18-78, and idem, “‘God-gifted girls’: The Rise of Women Illustrators in Late Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia,” *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* vol. 11, no. 2 (Summer 2015).

⁵⁴ For instance, see Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1990). An exception is Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, *American Women Artists from Early Indian Times to the Present* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982), 158-163.

⁵⁵ The separation between so-called “high” or “fine” art and “low” or “popular” art was not as strict in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as it has been made to appear. For more on these definitions and the separation between fine art and lower forms of visual media, see Patricia Johnston, ed. *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2006); Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, *High*

Despite its absence in current scholarship, professional artists and contemporary commentators of the era, not to mention the readers of the thousands of periodicals that circulated in the late nineteenth century, welcomed illustration's newfound prominence in mainstream culture.⁵⁶ They viewed the proliferation of commercial illustration as a step forward in the democratization of art, which would ultimately benefit all American citizens. Illustrators regarded their work as fine art and themselves as artists; illustrations were hung next to paintings, charcoal drawings, and photographs in art exhibitions; and magazine editors sought out illustrative work that was of the highest quality to attract readers. Many artists, Stephens among them, practiced and exhibited work in multiple media, displaying oil paintings and photographs alongside sketches and published illustrations, and most American artists viewed illustration as a practical extension of their artistic career.⁵⁷ Indeed, as Bogart has astutely argued, during the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, "the creation of both paintings and print illustrations did not pose aesthetic inconsistencies, and a young person's decision to pursue illustration as part of a fine arts career did not cause conflict, and in fact seemed quite sensible."⁵⁸ Although the modern tendency to devalue popular illustration is not new—its status was constantly debated by contemporary critics and artists, and there were some who "condemned

and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990). See also pages 22-25 in this dissertation.

⁵⁶ Elzea, *The Best of American Illustration*, 7. See also Levin, "The Golden Age of American Illustration," 105-108.

⁵⁷ Scanlan elaborates on how women in particular took advantage of exhibiting their work in multiple media, and its implications: "That many of the women chose to show their *magazine* work in art exhibitions indicates the artists were able to convert the popularity of their commercial illustrations into critical success, and they perceived a certain degree of fluidity between mass culture and high culture. The preference among many critics and viewers for the women's accessible, popular images, further suggests the "low art" of illustration was indeed able to coexist within the world of "high art." Scanlan, "'God-Gifted Girls,'" 160.

⁵⁸ Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 19.

illustration as ‘aboriginal and savage, if not childish’ and warned that its overuse would stifle original thinking”—the idea of illustration as a fine art did not meet forceful backlash until the 1930s.⁵⁹ By the time art critic Clement Greenberg famously dismissed popular illustration to the level of “kitsch” in his 1939 essay, “Avant-Garde and Kitch,” a distinct hierarchy among the various media in the art historical canon, with a modernist bias for the art of painting, had been solidified.⁶⁰

Stephens and her female colleagues have also been marginalized in scholarly texts and museum exhibitions devoted exclusively to American illustration, which tend to centralize the contributions of male illustrators at the expense of the women who comprised at least one-third of the artists whose work was regularly published in the illustrated press.⁶¹ When she is included in these sources, Stephens’ work has been consistently discussed in terms of its dependence upon the influence of male artists, including Stephens’ teacher, painter Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), and the male illustrators with whom she shared equal representation in popular magazines. For instance, in the catalog that accompanied the only museum exhibition dedicated specifically to Stephens’ work, curator Ann Barton Brown

⁵⁹ Scanlan, ““God-Gifted Girls’,” 91. Quote from Charles T. Congdon, “Over-Illustration,” *The North American Review* vol. 139, no. 336 (November 1884): 489.

⁶⁰ Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” *Partisan Review* vol. 6, no. 5 (Fall 1939): 34-49. Of course, art academies had for centuries prioritized and elevated the arts of painting and sculpture above other crafts. I argue that Greenberg took this separation even further by explicitly declaring illustrations like those made by Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) and his contemporaries as dangerous to social life, a view that was in stark contrast to critics and artists such as John Ruskin (1819-1900) decades earlier that promoted a more interwoven understanding of art and media traditionally understood as craft.

⁶¹ Masten, *Art Work*, 172. Indeed, although popular illustration was highly encouraged as a profitable career for young male artists, as Bogart has pointed out, the field was in fact dominated by women. Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 30. For examples of these kinds of generalized texts on American illustration, see Arpi Ermoyan, *Famous American Illustrators* (Crans, Switzerland: Rotovision, for Society of Illustrators, 1997); Susan Meyer, *America’s Great Illustrators* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1978); and Walt Reed, *Great American Illustrators* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1979). Reed later published *The American Illustrator, 1860-2000* (New York: Society of Illustrators, 2001), in which he allots one paragraph to Stephens’ work.

argued that Stephens “became personally and professionally acquainted with *Harper’s* artists and their work. Thus, her pen and ink work is stylistically similar to theirs.”⁶² Other art historians, and some contemporary art critics, have placed Stephens among the members of the “Howard Pyle School of Art,” the very name of which unites individual artists and their styles under the auspices of one “master.”⁶³ Pyle, perhaps the best-known illustrator of his day, trained over one hundred students throughout his career, first at the Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry in Philadelphia, and later at his own school in Wilmington, Delaware.⁶⁴ Many of his female students achieved considerable success as professional artists, including Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, and Jessie Willcox Smith, but Stephens was never one of them. In fact, she was teaching students of her own at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women and mentoring other young artists in her personal studio and at The Plastic Club while Pyle was leading his classes in Philadelphia and Delaware.⁶⁵

⁶² Ann Barton Brown, *Alice Barber Stephens: A Pioneer Woman Illustrator* (Chadd’s Ford, Pennsylvania: Brandywine River Museum, 1984), 15. The *Harper’s* artists Brown refers to are Charles Stanley Reinhart (1844-1896), A. B. Frost (1851-1926), Albert Sterner (1863-1946), Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911), and Frederick S. Dielman (1847-1935). It stands to reason that Stephens would have been “personally and professionally acquainted” with the other artists that worked for her publisher—their work was featured in the same magazines, after all. However, Brown’s argument, which is reliant upon a comparison between Stephens’ style and that of her male peers as evidence, neglects to support this claim that her illustrations are “stylistically similar” to the other artists’ at *Harper’s* with any evidence aside from pointing to Stephens’ familiarity with their work. Ultimately, this kind of argument, which is prevalent in scholarship on women artists generally, is reductive in its negation of Stephens’ agency as an artist and neglects to consider the potential influence that Stephens’ work had on her male colleagues.

⁶³ See, for example, Anne E. Mayer, *Women Artists in the Howard Pyle Tradition* (Chadd’s Ford, Pennsylvania: Brandywine River Museum, 1975).

⁶⁴ For more on Pyle and his influence, see Jill P. May and Robert E. May, *Howard Pyle: Imagining an American School of Art* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

⁶⁵ This commonly-assumed connection between Pyle and Stephens that has led historians and other scholars to wrongly and unfairly label Stephens as a “disciple of Howard Pyle” may have its roots in early essays that inaccurately recounted Stephens’ educational history. For instance, in 1900, an article written by Stephens’ colleague, Frances Burwell Sheaffer (d. 1938), falsely stated that Stephens was one of Pyle’s students at the Drexel Institute in the mid-1890s. A later essay by

Throughout her career, art critics routinely lauded Stephens' work and the role she played as a leader in her field. In 1893, a writer for *The Quarterly Illustrator* reported that "a cheery future for artists of the gentler sex is foretold in the successes attained by Alice Barber Stephens. The example she has set by her constant industry and her fortitude in the face of discouragement... are qualities which any ambitious woman artist would do well to emulate."⁶⁶ Art critic Regina Armstrong, in one of a series of essays devoted to popular women illustrators, described Stephens as "the leader of the coterie of women illustrators in [Philadelphia], to many of whom her career has doubtless been the stimulating cause of their adoption of the work she was one of the first to make successful for women."⁶⁷ Because of Stephens, Armstrong suggested, Philadelphia had come to be known as "the city of women illustrators," high praise considering that it was also the home to the best known male illustrators in the business.⁶⁸ And in 1904, Julius Moritzen, writing for *The Twentieth-Century Home*, commented on Stephens' consistency throughout her career,

author Norma K. Bright includes Stephens in a description of the "Howard Pyle School" of illustration. Pyle and Stephens did have a professional relationship; he lent her costumes to use as references for her illustrations, and often wrote to Stephens to compliment her work and sometimes offer advice. However, Pyle was not among the illustrators that Stephens listed as her role models. When asked whose work she admired, Stephens stated that Edwin Austin Abbey's illustrations inspired her most, even though she openly acknowledged his style was much different than her own. Thus, it is difficult to ground an argument that Stephens' work emulated or was influenced by one single male artist. Regina Armstrong, "Representative Women Illustrators: The Character Workers," *The Critic* vol. 37, no. 1 (July 1900): 43-44; Norma K. Bright, "Art in Illustration: The Achievements of a Group of Popular American Artists," *Book News* vol. 23, no. 275 (July 1905): 851; Susan R. Gannon, "Getting Cozy with a Classic: Visualizing *Little Women* (1868-1995)," in *Little Women and the Feminist Imagination: Criticism, Controversy, and Personal Essays*, ed. Janice M. Alberghene and Beverly Lyon Clark (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 123; Frances Burwell Sheaffer, "Alice Barber Stephens," *Brush and Pencil* vol. 6, no. 6 (September 1900): 243; Letter from Howard Pyle to Alice Barber Stephens, February 20, 1897, Alice Barber Stephens Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as "Alice Barber Stephens Papers").

⁶⁶ Frederick W. Webber, "A Clever Woman Illustrator," *The Quarterly Illustrator* vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1893): 180.

⁶⁷ Armstrong, "Representative Women Illustrators: The Character Workers," 49.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

remarking that “even as she reached the topmost rung of her profession, there is the same painstaking, the same application, the same attention to the slightest detail, which made the Alice Barber of twenty-five years ago the *leader of her class*.”⁶⁹ However, when Stephens is featured in art historical scholarship, her influential role in the art community of Philadelphia is consistently underestimated. For instance, in the previously-mentioned exhibition catalog entitled “Alice Barber Stephens: A Pioneer Woman Illustrator,” Brown concludes that Stephens was not, in fact, a pioneer in her field. Instead, Brown argues, “As a ‘pioneer,’ Stephens did not aggressively lead the way for women to advance as artists, but, perceiving the new opportunities available, she readily took advantage of them.”⁷⁰ Not only does this argument contradict the basis (and title) of the exhibition, it undermines Stephens’ career and her substantial involvement in creating change in a male-dominated art world. Furthermore, Brown’s conclusion also neglects to consider how contemporary critics and Stephens’ colleagues viewed both her and her art.

Like some of the best-known American women artists of the nineteenth century and earlier, Stephens was fortunate to have the advantage of both an early education and encouraging, enthusiastic support from her parents, Samuel Clayton Barber and Mary Owen Barber, who acknowledged Stephens’ talents and encouraged her artistic pursuits.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Moritzen, “Some Women Illustrators—Alice Barber Stephens,” 45. Emphasis added.

⁷⁰ Brown, *Alice Barber Stephens*, 35.

⁷¹ Nochlin has noted the importance of familial support in the success of women artists, arguing that the greatest of all women artists were all, “almost without exception, were either the daughters of artist fathers, or generally later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, had a close personal connection with a stronger or more dominant male artistic personality.” Nochlin discusses painters, specifically, but the argument holds for illustrators, sculptors, and women working in other media as well. If their parents were not artists themselves, the most successful illustrators in the late nineteenth century, Stephens included, were products of families that had

Born into a Quaker farming family on July 1, 1858 near Salem, New Jersey, Stephens is said to have displayed an early talent for drawing. After moving to Philadelphia at the age of seven and enrolling in the public-school system, Stephens' parents acquired special permission for her to miss one day of school each week to attend the Thursday art class at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (PSDW).⁷² By 1873, Stephens was a full-time student at PSDW, where she studied wood engraving under John Dalziel, an accomplished English engraver, and took classes in drawing and painting from antique casts.⁷³ While still a student, Stephens began submitting her engravings to publishers to help supplement her family's income and offset the cost of her tuition. Soon, her work was appearing regularly in *Scribner's Monthly*. In 1876, Stephens continued her education at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), where she enrolled in the woman's life class taught by Eakins, the only class of its kind in the United States in which women students were permitted to study directly from the nude model.⁷⁴

the ability and desire to connect their daughters to an artist who would train them. Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?", 168-170.

⁷² PSDW, now Moore College of Art and Design, was the first art academy exclusively for women in the United States. It was founded in 1847 by Sarah Worthington King Peter (1800-1877), a philanthropist and social leader. For more on the history of PSDW, see Nina de Angeli Walls, "Art and Industry in Philadelphia: Origins of the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, 1848-1876," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* vol. 117, no. 2 (July 1993): 177-199, and idem, *Art, Industry, and Women's Education in Philadelphia* (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 2001).

⁷³ Dalziel was the son of John Dalziel, Sr., a member of the "Brothers Dalziel," a well-known, family-owned engraving business in England. Brown, *Alice Barber Stephens*, 7; Ellen Mazur Thomson, *The Origins of Graphic Design in America, 1870-1920* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 70.

⁷⁴ PAFA initiated the first "Ladies' Life Class" in 1868, which allowed women students to study the female nude model in segregated classes. This practice did not change until 1877, when records show that male models were regularly scheduled for women's classes. See Christine Jones Huber, *The Pennsylvania Academy and its Women, 1850 to 1920* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1973), 16-17, 20-22.

Stephens as a Leader in Women's Art Education

It was at PAFA where Stephens encountered her first experience with organizing alongside other women to pressure for change within Philadelphia's art institutions. At PAFA, Eakins lectured on anatomy and assisted with the evening life classes, including the Ladies' Life Class in which Stephens was enrolled. Breaking with the European academy tradition, Eakins advocated for a progressive approach to art education that employed anatomical dissection and prioritized studying from the nude model in order to gain a complete understanding of the human form. He rejected the Academy's conventional model of instruction, which required students to work exclusively with sketches before advancing to experiment with oil paint, and he completely dismissed study from plaster casts.⁷⁵ In the spring of 1877, just months after he had joined the faculty, the Academy Board of Directors deemed Eakins' instruction methods too radical and cancelled his evening life class.⁷⁶

In response, Stephens and her peers, under the leadership of PAFA student and Eakins' future wife, Susan Hannah MacDowell (1851-1938), petitioned the Academy Board to allow for more class time devoted to the study of nude models. As part of their petition, they also requested that the Academy rehire Eakins to assist the current professor, Christian Schussele (1824-1879), with that endeavor. For those women whose professional lives prevented them from attending the only remaining life class available to them, which

⁷⁵ Brown, *Alice Barber Stephens*, 9.

⁷⁶ Controversy and scandal surrounding Eakins' teaching methods continued through his tenure at the Academy, and in 1886 he was fired. Many scholars have examined this moment in Eakins' career in detail. See Mary Cappello, "'Facing the Absolute Nude': Thomas Eakins, Alice Barber Stephens, and the Philadelphia School," *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory* vol. 5, no. 3-4 (1994): 187-211, and Kathleen Foster, "Eakins and the Academy," in *Thomas Eakins*, ed. Darrel Sewell and Kathleen Foster (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 95-105.

was scheduled in the early morning, Eakins' dismissal impeded their art education and hindered their progress. That the women saw Eakins as an ally who took them and their work seriously is revealed in their petition; they wrote of their experiences in his classes of the previous semester that he "proved him[self] to be an able instructor and a friend to *all* hard-working students."⁷⁷ Because of their appeal, the Academy Board scheduled an additional women's life class, but refused to immediately reinstate Eakins as the official instructor. However, due to Schussele's failing health, the Academy Board allowed Eakins to assist with the course. Eventually, Eakins was rehired as a professor in March the next year. This small act of polite protest is an early example of Stephens organizing with other women artists for the improvement of their own educations and the advancement of their individual careers. It also speaks to her dedication to innovation in teaching and the field of art in general, considering how original, though controversial, Eakins' teaching methods were at the time.

Just a year later, in 1879, Stephens illustrated the professionalism and camaraderie of PAFA's female students that led to an organized effort to re-hire Eakins. (Fig. 5). The painting, entitled *The Women's Life Class*, was made to accompany "The Art Schools of Philadelphia (With Illustrations by the Pupils)," an article published in the September 1879 issue of *Scribner's Monthly* (Fig. 6).⁷⁸ *The Women's Life Class* was one of ten works

⁷⁷ Petition from Susan Hannah MacDowell on behalf of the Women's Life Class to the Committee on Instruction of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, November 2, 1877, Committee on Instruction records, Collection ID# RG.01.03.06, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives, Philadelphia, PA. Emphasis added. Huber has written about the specific barriers that women students at PAFA faced that made it more difficult for them than their male peers. Huber, *The Pennsylvania Academy and its Women*, 21-23.

⁷⁸ William C. Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia (With Illustrations by the Pupils)," *Scribner's Monthly* vol. 18, no. 5 (September 1879): 743.

chosen for the publication and the only image of a women's art class to be included.⁷⁹ Completed in oil on cardboard in a range of black, white, and grey tones (colors chosen for their reproducibility in the engraving process), the painting depicts a classroom crowded with women art students observing and painting the nude, female model who stands on a raised platform facing away from the students and the viewer. MacDowell, Stephens' colleague and friend who drafted the petition to the Academy Board, has been identified as the figure in the foreground.⁸⁰ In addition to those students working diligently before their canvases, Stephens included more women standing and observing the class from the back of the room who appear to quietly converse with one another. This act of conversation points to a larger feeling of companionship amongst the women in the room, a familiarity with each other that is absent in the other images featured in the article, including Walter M. Davis's companion piece to *The Women's Life Class*, which takes place in the same classroom (Fig. 7). In Davis's image, the students are preoccupied with their own work. Apart from the figure on the far right, everyone looks ahead at their own easel; the male model seems to be included in the composition almost as an afterthought. This allusion to the female students' camaraderie speaks to a larger phenomenon that was forming around this time: women artists' networks.

Another marked difference between Stephens' *The Women's Life Class* and other contemporary portrayals of art students working from nude models is the women students' apparent lack of supervision. In many representations of studio classes, the professor is prominent and distinguished as the teacher-figure, including several of the illustrations that

⁷⁹ Of the ten images, the only other woman artist represented was MacDowell, who contributed *Painting of a Gentleman and Dog* and the drawing, *Differentiating the Muscles of the Face by Electricity*. Ibid., 745 and 749.

⁸⁰ Cappello, "Facing the Absolute Nude," 192.

were published alongside *The Women's Life Class*. In *The Antique Class* by PAFA student Philip B. Hahs (1853-1882), the teacher stands behind his seated students, giving advice over one's shoulder, adopting a posture that is echoed by the statue above (Fig. 8). A later example, a photograph by Frances Benjamin Johnston entitled *Art Students' League*, depicts a classroom full of female students presided over by both their male teacher and the male model who "tower over" the women (Fig. 9).⁸¹ For a painting intended to accompany an article that outlined the successes and controversy surrounding Eakins' teaching methods, specifically, the missing art professor in Stephens' painting is particularly striking. In the absence of a teacher, the central focus of *The Women's Life Class* becomes the nude woman who the students seem to "encircle and protect" from outside eyes with their semi-circular arrangement around her body.⁸²

The Women's Life Class is noteworthy as one of Stephens' first published illustrations and as an early image of women's increased participation in art academies in general. More significant, however, is how Stephens used this illustration to subversively call attention to the recent controversy over life drawing classes within the Academy, and to celebrate the female students' successful protest to bring those classes (and, eventually, Eakins) back to the school. Indeed, Stephens' model, with her close resemblance to the female nudes in Eakins' drawings and paintings, acts as a direct reference to the conspicuously absent teacher whose courses inspired the students' petition. Evidence of Eakins' influence on Stephens' style can be seen predominantly in how she positions and handles the nude model (Fig. 10). The shading, outline, and pose of Stephens' model is, as

⁸¹ Judith Fryer Davidov, *Women's Camera Work: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998), 56.

⁸² Ibid., 55.

English and American Studies scholar Judith Fryor Davidov and others have observed, remarkably similar to the nude model in Eakins' *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, a painting Eakins was working on when Stephens enrolled at PAFA in 1876 (Fig. 11).⁸³ Stephens was not only a student in Eakins' life classes, where she would have been introduced to his many figure studies and trained in his technique, but she also engraved several of his paintings for publication in *Scribner's Monthly* (Figs. 12-13).⁸⁴ Thus, even if Stephens did not intentionally base the nude model in *The Women's Life Class* on Eakins' allegorical Schuylkill River, she had much experience working in his style. It appears that at least some contemporary viewers understood the underlying meaning in Stephens' painting as well. A writer for the magazine *Woman's Progress in Literature, Science, Art, Education, and Politics*, a monthly magazine that was dedicated to "the wants of the fin de siècle woman" and in "support of intelligent women,"⁸⁵ remarked that the painting "proved to be a *very spirited* piece of work, and was one of the most successful in the series."⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid. Cappello also compares *The Women's Life Class* to Eakins' *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure*. Cappello, "Facing the Absolute Nude," 196. For more on Eakins' *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure*, see Elizabeth Johns, "William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River," in *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 82-114. Johns contextualizes Eakins' painting with earlier studio pictures, and briefly mentions his students' paintings that were published in *Scribner's Monthly* "a little more than a year after" he finished the *William Rush* painting. Even though Johns reproduces Stephens' painting, she does not mention her by name. Johns, *Thomas Eakins*, 103-104.

⁸⁴ These engravings appeared in the June 1879, May 1880, and June 1880 issues. Ellwood C. Parry, III, and Maria Chamberlin-Hellman, "Thomas Eakins as an Illustrator, 1878-1881," *American Art Journal* vol. 5, no. 1 (May 1973): 30-37.

⁸⁵ M. E. D. Beattie, "Book Reviews," *Daughters of the Revolution Magazine* vol. 4, no. 2 (May 1896): 111. *Woman's Progress* was established by women's rights advocate Marianne Campbell and edited by her sister, Jane Campbell, who founded the Women's Suffrage Society of Philadelphia. The magazine was published by The Progress Publishing Company of Philadelphia and ran from 1893 to 1896.

⁸⁶ "Alice Barber Stephens—Illustrator," *Woman's Progress in Literature, Science, Art, Education, Politics* vol. 2, no. 2 (November 1893): 51. Emphasis added.

Upon graduating from PAFA in 1880, Stephens began her professional career as a painter and continued to work full-time as an engraver for *Scribner's Monthly*, supplementing her income by teaching private art lessons in her home studio. Throughout the early 1880s, Stephens' engravings were widely published, but she increasingly began working in pen and ink, a popular medium for illustrations because its thin lines allowed for higher quality reproductions that more accurately represented the artists' original design in print. In 1885, Harper Brothers hired Stephens as a full-time illustrator, drawing primarily for children's books and periodicals, including *Harper's Young People*. In 1886, feeling overworked and exhausted, Stephens travelled to Europe, visiting Italy, London, Paris, and Holland. She enrolled in classes at the Académie Julian and the Académie Colarossi in Paris, two of the city's only institutions that accepted female students, and exhibited two works at the Paris Salon of 1887.⁸⁷ When she returned to Philadelphia in 1887, Stephens resumed her illustrative work and continued to participate in exhibitions throughout the city, submitting oil painting, water colors, and sketches in addition to her published illustrations.

Stephens clearly understood how crucial education and training were to the success of artists. In 1897, while regularly publishing her illustrations in both magazines and novels, Stephens was also actively working to establish another organization for artists' professional interests, specifically PAFA alumnae. The goal of the Fellowship of the Pennsylvania Academy, as it became known, was to "create a closer union between current students and alumni, and to promote the interests and welfare of the Academy."⁸⁸ Perhaps

⁸⁷ This time in Stephens' life has been chronicled differently by multiple sources. Varying dates have been documented for her time abroad, and sources disagree on which studios she visited and who she studied under.

⁸⁸ Brown, *Alice Barber Stephens*, 26.

unsurprisingly, as PAFA was among the first art institutions to accept women students, the Fellowship became the first organization of its kind to include both men and women members. As an alumna, Stephens would have been invested in the Academy's commitment to its students; as a professional woman artist, Stephens might have been especially motivated to push for a "closer union between current students and alumni" in order to help encourage younger women in the field of illustration.

In 1888, Stephens began working at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women at the invitation of the school's principal, Emily Sartain (1841-1947). Sartain, a successful painter and engraver in her own right, had worked since the 1870s to create opportunities for women in the art community of Philadelphia.⁸⁹ Under the supervision of Sartain and Stephens, the coursework at PSDW developed from traditional instruction that emphasized practical wood engraving skills, much like the classes Stephens took as a student a decade earlier, to coursework that embraced new methods that included working outdoors and from the nude model. Stephens taught life-drawing classes, becoming the first teacher at PSDW to do so, and her classes were met with "marked success."⁹⁰ Once again, Stephens proved herself to be a leader in the realm of art education by implementing once-controversial teaching methods that she had benefitted from as a student. The art community in Philadelphia took note. As one contemporary critic observed, "into the conservative heads of whose recalcitrant directors [Stephens] infused almost a modern

⁸⁹ For more on Sartain, see Katharine Martinez and Page Talbott, eds., *Philadelphia's Cultural Landscape: The Sartain Family Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), and Phyllis Peet, "The Art Education of Emily Sartain," *Woman's Art Journal* vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring – Summer, 1990): 9-15.

⁹⁰ Frank S. Guild, "Mrs. Alice Barber Stephens," *The Ladies' Home Journal* vol. 12, no. 6 (May 1895): 10.

spirit.”⁹¹ In 1891, in a series of essays on American art academies in *The Art Amateur*, artist, writer, and lecturer Ernest Knaufft (1864-1942) discussed the curriculum at PSDW in detail. Knaufft found a “record of progress in every department,” especially in Stephens’ life classes which offered “young girls the unique advantage of pursuing this study under the guidance of one of their own sex.”⁹² After their own experiences in Eakins’ notorious life classes at PAFA, the classes offered by Sartain and Stephens at PSDW provided women students with a controversy-free space in which to learn skills that by the 1890s were deemed necessary for a complete academic art education.

Collaboration and Mentorship: Alice Barber Stephens and Charlotte Harding

Stephens had many students, but her relationship with illustrator Charlotte Harding is most noteworthy because it exemplifies the many ways that women artists could work together and the professional benefits that arose from close collaboration between women artists during this period (Fig. 14). Many scholars have focused on women artists’ relationships with their male teachers. For instance, Swinth emphasizes the importance of those relationships and views them as almost necessary for a woman’s success. She writes, “In a world in which instructors often treated women’s art cavalierly and with casual praise, securing genuine interest and sincere advice was an important source of encouragement

⁹¹ Aimée Tourgée, “A Clever Woman Artist,” *The Art Interchange* vol. 39, no. 4 (October 1897): 74. Stephens taught life classes at PSDW from 1888 to 1891; portrait classes from 1891 to 1892; and portrait, pen and ink, and life classes from 1892-1893. See Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1976), 446.

⁹² Ernest Knaufft, “Our American Art Schools. Philadelphia—III. The School of Design for Women,” *The Art Amateur*, vol. 24, no. 3 (February 1891): 67.

and validation.”⁹³ However, Stephens’ and Harding’s relationship testifies to the ways that women’s relationships with their female colleagues could be equally as important.

Harding was Stephens’ student in the life class at PSDW. Despite the fifteen-year age difference between them, the two women became close friends, and in 1899, Stephens invited Harding to share her studio at 1004 Chestnut Street, in the “heart of the Philadelphia art scene.”⁹⁴ Stephens and Harding were studio partners until 1903, when Harding moved into her own studio at 10 South 18th Street. Their close relationship and studio partnership, and Stephens’ influence on Harding’s artistic development, is reflected in both the style and subject matter of much of Harding’s illustrative work. A close examination of their relationship and their work shows how using strategies of sisterhood, rather than being in a “school” under one “master,” allowed women to develop and perfect their own individual models of working.

Very little scholarship exists on Harding or her work, but when she is discussed, art historians have emphasized Pyle’s influence on her artistic style.⁹⁵ Harding studied under Pyle at the Drexel Institute, and many of her illustrations, especially her pen and ink drawings, are indebted to his teachings. However, close examination of Harding’s illustrations, particularly those published after 1899 when she shared Stephens’ studio, reveal a strong influence of Stephens’ style as well. Curator Anne Barton Brown has argued that after they met, Stephens’ and Harding’s “lives and careers gradually became so intricately intertwined that it is hard to determine where Stephens’ influence stopped and

⁹³ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 49.

⁹⁴ Anne Barton Brown, *Charlotte Harding: An Illustrator in Philadelphia* (Chadd’s Ford, Pennsylvania: Brandywine River Museum, 1982), 10.

⁹⁵ One reason for this connection may be the numerous letters between Harding and Pyle that have been saved and archived. See Mayer, *Women Artists in the Howard Pyle Tradition*, 12, and Brown, *Charlotte Harding*, 9.

where Harding's own innate artistic sense began."⁹⁶ The artists exhibited their work in the same venues, including the annual exhibitions held at PAFA and several exhibitions hosted by The Plastic Club. Their work appeared in the same publications, sometimes even the same issue, and they even illustrated for some of the same authors.⁹⁷ As their relationship developed from one between teacher and student into a friendship and studio partnership, Harding adopted several aspects of Stephens' style and working methods, including her commitment to direct observation. Stephens' worked from life at every opportunity, relying on models and historical costumes for accuracy in both form and subject, referring to photographs only when necessary. When feasible, she visited the locations of her scenes to ensure accuracy of detail.⁹⁸ These working methods were furthered by Stephens and other instructors in the classrooms at PSDW. Like Stephens, Harding became preoccupied with achieving a strong sense of realism in her illustrations, and she also adopted the practice of travelling to different locations to be as accurate as possible.⁹⁹

However, Stephens' and Harding's artistic styles are by no means so intertwined that one cannot distinguish between the two artists' work, as Brown has suggested. Early in her career, when Stephens was illustrating exclusively for Harper Brothers, she often

⁹⁶ Brown, *Charlotte Harding*, 9. Brown cites Stephens as "the major influence in [Harding's] professional development," and discusses the similarities between the two artists' styles generally. Although she says that "much can be surmised by examining and comparing the women's work for illustration," Brown neglects to point to specific works of art to support her claims. Aside from their sketches and photographs of Stephens and Harding in their studio, there are no surviving letters or other type of documentation that can provide insight into the personal relationship between the two women. This means that visual analysis of the two artists' styles is the primary way that art historians can evaluate Stephens' influence on Harding. Brown also writes that, "Stephens taught Harding to create well-drawn forms with broad areas of color and to minimize details," which does not make sense when considering Stephens' own work, which is highly detailed.

⁹⁷ Both women were featured in the June 1906 issue of *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, for example.

⁹⁸ Sheaffer, "Alice Barber Stephens," 246.

⁹⁹ Bright, "Art in Illustration," 849.

relied on pen and ink as her chosen medium. This decision was probably due to the limited capabilities of early photo-mechanical reproduction processes, which duplicated line drawings more clearly than brushstrokes and often limited the artist's palette to black and white. Stephens had always preferred paint to pencil, though, and by the 1890s, her work was almost exclusively done in watercolor or oil. By this time, photo-mechanical reproduction processes had matured, allowing for greater artistic innovation in terms of detail, particularly color and shading. Yet, Harding maintained her signature style of drawing with black and white throughout her career, relying on bold outlines rather than shading and minimal use of color in her compositions. Stephens' illustrations are significantly more detailed than Harding's, providing the viewer with meticulously thought-out settings for the characters, whereas Harding's backgrounds are often sparse or nonexistent.

In 1900, shortly after they became studio partners, art critic Regina Armstrong featured Stephens and Harding in one of a series of articles on popular illustrators published in *The Critic*.¹⁰⁰ The essay described the work of those illustrators whom Armstrong branded as "the character workers," or artists whom she deemed to be particularly adept at sympathetically capturing the true personalities of their subjects. This group included New York-based illustrators Susan Yandell Wendel Barry (b. 1865) and Fanny Young Cory (1877-1972), in addition to Stephens and Harding.¹⁰¹ Armstrong discussed each artist in terms of their individual careers, detailing their personal backgrounds, professional

¹⁰⁰ Armstrong, "Representative Women Illustrators: The Character Workers," 43-54.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Susan Yandell Wendel Barry was a cousin of sculptor Enid Yandell. She was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee; worked in New York at the time of Armstrong's article was published in 1904; and moved to New Orleans in 1916 with her husband, Eugene Taylor Barry, whom she married in 1898. See *ibid.*, pages 51-52.

achievements, and their individual styles. A portrait of each artist and examples of their work accompanied Armstrong's commentary.

Stephens' and Harding's characteristic styles can best be compared in two of the illustrations that were published in Armstrong's essay. Barry and Cory contributed self-portraits to the magazine, both of which are closely cropped, roughly sketched, and devoid of background or specific setting. However, Stephens' and Harding's were drawn by one another, further emphasizing the two artists' close working relationship that Armstrong described in the essay. Stephens portrays Harding in deep concentration, seated and busy with a drawing in her lap (Fig. 15). Details of their shared studio can be seen behind her, including a shelf with various bric-a-brac, pictures on the wall, and a small table set for tea in the background—all of which can also be seen in contemporary photographs of their studio (see Fig. 21). In her distinctive style, Stephens paid close attention to the setting, delineating the patterns of the pillows, table cloth, and wall hanging, and sketching in each item on the shelf above Harding's head. The foreground, though, remains hastily sketched in, with uncharacteristic broad expanses of white that imply the unfinished quality of a preliminary sketch. The focus is entirely on Harding in the middle of the composition, whose quiet preoccupation with her work—she is unbothered by Stephens, the other working artist in the room—recalls Stephens' earlier portrayal of MacDowell in *The Women's Life Class* (see Fig. 5).

In comparison, Harding's portrait of Stephens is less detailed. She omitted the studio background and instead situated Stephens in a chair against a dark wall (Fig. 16). Like the other artists' portraits featured in Armstrong's essay, Harding's sketch of Stephens seems hurriedly drawn, with more emphasis on the figure's face than any other aspect of

the composition. Whereas Stephens treated her portrait sketch as a full-page illustration, Harding leaves wide expanses of white around the image, anticipating the accompanying text. This is reflective of the two artists' distinct styles and how they envisioned an image working within its story. In general, Stephens' illustrations are decidedly meticulous, with just as much attention paid to the setting as the figures, which allowed for beautiful, comprehensive images that could (and often did) stand alone on the printed page. Harding's illustrations, on the other hand, were typically smaller, focused only on the most necessary elements, and were usually found within the text itself.

Despite the distinct differences in their styles, Stephens' and Harding's illustrations worked well together. *The Betrothal of Elypholate and Other Tales of the Pennsylvania Dutch*, a 1907 book by Helen Reimensnyder Martin (1868-1939), included illustrations by both artists.¹⁰² Stephens and Harding collaborated on this commission years after they had moved to separate studios, a testament to their close friendship and continued professional relationship. Martin's compilation included eight short stories and nine illustrations. A contemporary advertisement for *The Betrothal of Elypholate* described their illustrations as having "caught the spirit of the book most delightfully."¹⁰³ Each artist retains her signature style; Stephens' illustrations are precisely detailed, and the settings are customized to each story, while Harding prioritized the relationships between her emotive characters over attention to detail and comprehensive backgrounds.

While their styles remain distinctive, Harding's and Stephens' illustrations for *The Betrothal of Elypholate* focus on similar themes that consistently arise throughout the book:

¹⁰² Helen Reimensnyder Martin, *The Betrothal of Elypholate and Other Tales of the Pennsylvania Dutch* (New York: The Century Company, 1907).

¹⁰³ Advertisement in *The Century Magazine* vol. 75, no. 1 (November 1907), n.p.

tension between male and female characters; women's interior monologues; and women occupied with domestic tasks. Martin, known for her stories and books about the Amish people of the Pennsylvania Dutch communities, was an outspoken advocate for women's suffrage. Her stories often portrayed women as "victims of a misogynistic economic system" where only the "most enterprising women could escape."¹⁰⁴ For the frontispiece, Stephens focused on the quiet tension between a wife and her husband after a disagreement. The figures face away from one another, and each is preoccupied with their own tasks; he sits turned away, reading a newspaper, while she is busy with what appears to be needlework or mending (Fig. 17). The tasks that Stephens depicted the husband and wife undertaking are reflective of contemporary attitudes toward the different roles and duties of men and women had in the home, although these ideas were rapidly shifting at the end of the nineteenth century.

Interestingly, Harding's illustration for a story with a near identical theme is in marked contrast to Stephens' frontispiece image. To illustrate "The Reforming of a Bridegroom," Harding centralized Katy and her "unwifely defiance" when her husband responds with astonishment after learning that Katy spent their savings without his permission (Fig. 18). In a sparse room with only a dining table between them, Katy responds to her husband's glare with an expression of unbothered amusement. Visually, she is placed in a more prominent position within the composition, standing with her head above her husband's, and, unlike Stephens' protagonist who dutifully concentrates on her sewing, Katy half-heartedly continues with her knitting while standing. Despite the artists' choices to depict the same subject, there are distinct differences in both the visual and

¹⁰⁴ David Weaver-Zercher, *The Amish in the American Imagination* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 39.

thematic treatment of marriage in these two images that can be attributed to the difference in the artists' ages and personal experiences. Thus, while Harding adopted several practices from Stephens, and their collaborations were well-received, a closer examination of their work reveals how shifting attitudes towards (white, middle-class) womanhood effected each artists' work.

Outside of their collaborations, Harding followed in her mentor's footsteps by taking on similar subject matter in the popular press as well, including commissions that called for images of the modern American woman. As illustrators for magazines with a predominantly white, middle-class female readership, Stephens and Harding were often called upon to illustrate stories about those issues that those women faced in their daily lives, including stories of motherhood and romance. The New Woman appeared often in their illustrations as a type who took on many different roles, including that of socialite, mother, wife, student, and aspiring artist. Both women portrayed the New Woman as an artist multiple times, and these illustrations are reflective of their own unique professional experiences.

In 1895, Stephens illustrated "Three Chapters," a short story about Bess and Selma, two friends who are both ambitious, young artists, that appeared in *The Cosmopolitan*.¹⁰⁵ As the story progresses, Selma falls in love, gets married, and has a baby while Bess makes a career for herself in the city. Ultimately, the two women grow apart, and Selma's dreams of selling her paintings are eventually supplanted by the duties of motherhood. For the only full-page illustration in the story, *Selma threw herself at full length on the ground*, Stephens portrayed the two women on a grassy hill (Fig. 19). Bess concentrates on painting the small

¹⁰⁵ Gertrude Blake Stanton, "Three Chapters," *The Cosmopolitan* vol. 18, no. 6 (April 1895): 741.

canvas on the easel in front of her, her open artist's toolbox and extra canvases located nearby. Selma, on the other hand, lies on the grass in the foreground, facing away from Bess and looking dreamily into the distance. Like the most of Stephens' illustrative work, this single-page image captures the specific scene that gives the illustration its name, but it also serves to encapsulate the story as a whole. In the text, Bess and Selma are sharing a long and intimate conversation during this scene, but the emotional dissonance and physical distance between the two women in Stephens' illustration hint at the eventual barrier that will divide their friendship once their professional and personal choices lead them down different paths. "Three Chapters" is a fictional story that would have spoken to contemporary women's reality about having to choose between motherhood and a professional career. For Stephens in 1895, this story would have been particularly poignant; she had a child of her own just two years earlier but, unlike Selma, Stephens was able to successfully balance her professional work with her duties as a wife and mother.

Harding addressed the subject of the young woman artist in 1907 when she provided the illustrations for "The Very Tired Girl," a short story by Eleanor Abbott that was featured in *Collier's Weekly* (Fig. 20).¹⁰⁶ The story is about Noreen Gaudette, a young, unmarried cartoonist who struggles to build her career while sharing an attic studio apartment in a boarding house with two other young women. One evening, after walking back to their apartment in the rain after a particularly hard day, Noreen exclaims to her roommates, "I am so tired—that I wish that the first man who ever proposed to me would come back and ask me—again!"¹⁰⁷ To her surprise, Noreen is visited by an old beau and

¹⁰⁶ Eleanor Hallowell Abbott, "The Very Tired Girl," *Collier's* vol. 40, no. 8 (November 16, 1907): 13-15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

promptly accepts his proposal of marriage that very evening. However, the engagement is called off after a few months because Noreen felt that “marriage is not for [her].” Noreen “couldn’t afford to be engaged. It takes too much time” and it interfered with her job as a cartoonist for the newspaper.¹⁰⁸ She defiantly tells her admiring neighbor, who has fallen for Noreen’s independent and determined spirit, that she would never marry, but she also was not going to be doomed to the fate of being an “Old Maid.” “No one who creates anything is an ‘Old Maid’,” she says. “I am TALENT, and I do not rime [sic] with LOVE. I am TALENT and I do not rime [sic] with MAN.”¹⁰⁹

The three-page story includes six small, anecdotal illustrations scattered within the text, one of which was also adapted for the cover of the magazine. These illustrations emphasize the physical and emotional strain that Noreen faced, which Abbott repeatedly described. Four of the images depict that first exhausting evening; these include an image of the three tired women walking home, an image of a wearied Noreen seated in their apartment, and two small images of Noreen crying, crouched on the stairs of the boarding house with her face in her hands. Harding chose not to include illustrations of Noreen’s brief engagement, but focused instead on the important, emotional moments related to her career. Noreen is always shown in her “business suit,” a striped long-sleeve blouse with a dark tie and a dark, long skirt that reaches to her feet, instead of the gowns she was forced to purchase for her engagement. The cover illustration, adapted from the first image of the three roommates walking home in the rain, portrays Noreen struggling to hold onto her portfolio and umbrella as loose drawings threaten to slip out from under her right arm. Wisps of hair have fallen from her bun and hang loose around her flushed face as she looks

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Original emphasis.

forward. Although Harding had achieved considerable success as an illustrator by the time this story was published,¹¹⁰ it would have been easy for Harding, who traversed the city herself as a young illustrator to try and convince art editors to publish her work, to identify with Noreen's situation.¹¹¹

Stephens' and Harding's illustrations of the woman artist follow their illustrations for *The Betrothal of Elypholate* and, when juxtaposed, reveal much about the different experiences faced by Stephens, an artist of the generation that fought to gain admittance into art academies, and Harding, who benefitted from the work done by those women who came before her. Stephens' Bess represents the mature woman artist who has achieved some success, who has had to make difficult decisions about her professional career, friendships, and motherhood. Stephens's full-page illustration depicts Bess as a fashionably dressed gentlewoman, competent and in control of her future. Unlike Selma, who has discarded her canvas and painter's tools in favor of daydreaming, Bess is actively working towards her goal of becoming a serious painter; her dutiful concentration on the painting before her as she leans towards her canvas is in direct opposition to the dreamy, faraway gaze of her reclining companion. Harding's Noreen is the epitome of the young artist at the beginning of her career, working to make a way for herself in the publishing world. The self-referential figure of Noreen, whose features resemble those of the artist,

¹¹⁰ By 1907, Harding's illustrations were regularly published in major women's magazines, she exhibited her work in multiple World's Fairs, and was the recipient of numerous awards.

¹¹¹ Both Bogart and Masten have described the process that illustrators in the late nineteenth century went through to obtain commissions, descriptions that graphically recall Harding's illustration. For instance, Bogart observes, "since not all art directors would commit their time in advance, an illustrator often had to shuttle from one office to another, usually carrying a heavy portfolio." In a similar tone, Masten writes, "Women illustrators were their own publicists, shuttling from one office to another carrying a heavy portfolio, an unnerving experience for young male and female artists alike." Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 33, and Masten, *Art Work*, 191.

reveals that Harding must have identified with her character. Brown has noted that many of Harding's figures share similar qualities with the artist, such as their "round-eyed faces" and "fresh breezy manners."¹¹² Indeed, Noreen shares Harding's round, youthful features, and her hair, like Harding's, is smooth and dark, carefully parted down the middle and tied back in a loose bun (see Figs. 14-15). That Harding identified strongly with the New Woman type is evident in her oeuvre. She depicted the New Woman many other times throughout her career as the idea of the New Woman became more prevalent in the early twentieth century, both as imagined in the popular media and realized in the public sphere.¹¹³

Stephens and Harding benefitted from sharing a studio space, and they were not alone. Sharing spaces was just one more way that women artists fostered artist networks that helped them to grow both personally and professionally. As Scanlan and other scholars have noted, women artists across the United States shared studios and even lived together. This kind of "communal living," Scanlan writes, "made studios affordable and furnished a semblance of respectability for their artistic lifestyles."¹¹⁴ Contemporary writers drew attention to this new trend in novels and in the popular press. In an article about women

¹¹² Brown, *Charlotte Harding*, 9.

¹¹³ For instance, Harding often illustrated stories about students and athletes at women's colleges, as well as stories about women who defied traditional expectations and societal norms, for *The Century Magazine*. See Alice Katharine Fallows, "Athletics for College Girls" *The Century Magazine* vol. 66, no. 1 (May 1903): 58-65, and idem, "Working One's Way Through Women's Colleges," *The Century Magazine* vol. 62, no. 3 (July 1901): 323-341; Lillie Hamilton French, "Some of Our Wise Virgins," *The Century Magazine* vol. 63, no. 3 (January 1902): 321-333; and Eliot Gregory, "Our Foolish Virgins," *The Century Magazine* vol. 63, no. 1 (November 1901): 3-15.

¹¹⁴ Scanlan, "'God-Gifted Girls,'" 53.

artists in New York City, Grace Alexander Fowler described how “clubbing” benefitted artists both financially and creatively.¹¹⁵ She argued, “it has been proved that by

thus clubbing together, the expense of living is lessened, and more comforts are possible than otherwise can be obtained by the professional woman. Where the monthly rent of a studio is as high as fifty dollars, when shared by three it is possible, with proper management, to reduce the monthly living expenses of one to one-half that amount. The prevalent idea that women artists exist on a pickle or so a day and a box of bonbons is in most instances erroneous, for the advanced women of to-day knows full well that fresh air and well-cooked wholesome food are material aids to good work.”¹¹⁶

By living together, young, single women could slip through strict societal conventions, and this practice fascinated modern readers. Descriptions and photographs of artist’s studios, including Stephens’ and Harding’s, appeared in periodicals and art journals, giving readers an intimate view into the artist’s studio.¹¹⁷ In addition to the sketches provided by the two artists for *The Critic* in 1900, a photograph of the Stephens-Harding studio, which depicts the two women seated at a table set for tea, was included alongside an article on Stephens in the *Metropolitan Magazine* that same year (Fig. 21).¹¹⁸ Their studio was described by artist Frances Burwell Sheafer as a “quaint room, with a low ceiling, built in the form of an L, and arranged with quiet good taste. It is an attractive workroom, with all the appointments necessary to the calling of its occupants, and when it is occasionally opened for a ‘studio tea’ it is frequented by all the artistic community of Philadelphia.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Fowler, “Studio Life Among Women Artists,” 210. For more on novels such as these, see Chapter Two in this dissertation.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Sheafer, “Alice Barber Stephens,” 246; Tourgée, “A Clever Woman Artist,” 74.

¹¹⁸ W. B. Crane, “America’s Foremost Woman Illustrator,” *Metropolitan Magazine*, n.d., reel 4152, frame 351, Alice Barber Stephens Papers.

¹¹⁹ Sheafer, “Alice Barber Stephens,” 246.

Harding seems to have drawn upon her relationship with Stephens in many of her illustrations, both during and after the time in which they shared a studio. Several of Harding's illustrations include women who resemble Stephens, and one of Harding's illustrations, *They both came to think of home as being together*, may directly reference a photograph of Stephens and Harding (Figs. 22-23).¹²⁰ Harding saw Stephens as a model of success to emulate; the two women shared much in common, not only in their professional ambitions but in their family histories as well. Both women entered a career in the arts to help support their families and to achieve financial independence. As art historian Helen Goodman has noted, "the difficult circumstances of Charlotte Harding's childhood and early adolescence dictated that she be self-supporting and responsible... [she] 'knew she would not only have to earn her own living,' but would also have to 'help at home supporting the younger brothers'."¹²¹ Like Stephens, Harding enrolled in art school when she was just a teenager, at sixteen years old. Also like Stephens, but unlike the majority of women artists whose names have made it into art history books, Harding eventually married and had children. Perhaps she saw in Stephens a model of artistic professionalism that successfully mixed an artistic career with familial duties and motherhood.

Organized Womanhood: Stephens and "That Vigorous Band of Women Artists"¹²²

By the late 1890s, Stephens was a leading figure in Philadelphia's growing network of women artists and her influence had spread outside of the classroom into other

¹²⁰ Anne Douglas Sedgwick, "A Forsaken Temple, Part I," *The Century Magazine* vol. 65, no. 1 (November 1902): 49.

¹²¹ Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration," 18.

¹²² Unidentified clipping, pg. 14, Scrapbook 1897-1903, Box 43, the Plastic Club Records (Collection 3106), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as "The Plastic Club Records").

established areas of the Philadelphia art world. In March of 1897, Stephens met informally with a group of other women artists that included Sartain and painter Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942) to form The Plastic Club, the first art organization in the city devoted specifically to women.¹²³ The goal of the organization was to “promote a wider knowledge of Art, and advance its interests by means of social intercourse among artists.”¹²⁴ From its inception, Stephens held executive positions within the organization consistently until the end of her career.¹²⁵ She was appointed Chairman of the Exhibition Committee at the Club’s first meeting, a position she held from May 1897 to April 1898. As Chairman, Stephens oversaw the six public art exhibitions that were hosted and curated by The Plastic Club in its first year.¹²⁶ The next year, Stephens took on the role of Vice President, a position she held consistently from 1898 to 1912, in addition to assuming other roles as needed, such as serving on exhibition advisory committees and hosting club events.¹²⁷

¹²³ For more on the history and activities of The Plastic Club, see Helen Goodman, “The Plastic Club,” *Arts Magazine* vol. 59 (March 1985): 100-103; Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 123-124 and 158-159; and Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 120-123.

¹²⁴ Constitution and By-Laws of The Plastic Club, 1897, Box 2, Folder 4, The Plastic Club Records.

¹²⁵ Records, including exhibition catalogs, membership lists, club calendars, and meeting minutes, document Stephens’ participation in Club activities. See The Plastic Club Records.

¹²⁶ These six exhibitions included an exhibition of Japanese color prints; an exhibition of “black and white work” by members; an exhibition of the “color work” by members; and three solo exhibitions highlighting work by Stephens, Cecilia Beaux, and Club President, Blanche Dillaye (1851-1932). See Margaret Hamilton Welch, “Club Women and Club Work: Over-full Programmes [sic],” *Harper’s Bazaar* vol. 31, no. 30 (July 23, 1898): 634. For individual exhibition catalogs, see The Plastic Club Records.

¹²⁷ Strangely, not every contemporary writer emphasized or even acknowledged Stephens’ influence and active presence in the Philadelphia art scene. In 1895, Frank S. Guild called attention to Stephens’ supposed lack of involvement in the art world in *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, a periodical which often included Stephens’ illustrations. He wrote that “Mrs. Stephens has had no time to devote to society, nor is she a member of any literary or art clubs, but the Civic Club, devoted to municipal reform and to the purifications and elevation of the many lines of human endeavor, claims her as an enthusiastic member.” What Guild neglected to acknowledge is that women were prohibited from joining any of the art clubs that were already established in Philadelphia at the time. Frances Burwell Sheaffer, Stephens’ colleague and long-time Secretary of The Plastic Club, wrote in 1900 that Stephens “has from time to time kept in touch with the

In addition to her leadership roles within The Plastic Club, Stephens gave lectures to Club members and the public; was a regular participant in many of the Club's exhibitions; and her name became almost synonymous with The Plastic Club in the local press. She was also among the first members to be honored with a solo exhibition hosted by The Plastic Club, which was held in February 1898 and was met with considerable acclaim (Fig. 24).¹²⁸ The exhibition included a collection of almost eighty works of art, ranging from oil paintings and works in pastel to published illustrations, photographs, and photogravure reproductions. The variety found in Stephens' exhibition attests to the wide range of work she produced, and underscores her commitment to more traditional modes of art production in addition to her prolific career as an illustrator. Among the works included were landscape paintings in oil, pen-and-ink illustrations, preliminary watercolor sketches, mixed media illustrations, pastel studies, photographic reproductions of published works, and two photographs.¹²⁹

One noteworthy inclusion in Stephens' solo exhibition was *Selecting Miniatures*, an 1895 illustration for *Harper's Weekly* that portrays a group of well-dressed ladies examining a set of miniatures in an elegant department store (Fig. 25).¹³⁰ With its subject

artistic development of the city," and understated Stephens' leadership and founding roles in both the Plastic Club and the Fellowship of the Academy of the Fine Arts. Sheaffer's misrepresentation of Stephens' involvement in The Plastic Club is interesting, especially since in 1900 when the article was published, Stephens was quite active as an executive officer and often included her work in the Club's exhibitions. This oversight in the press may be one reason that Stephens and her influence has been overlooked by scholars. Guild, "Mrs. Alice Barber Stephens," 10; Sheaffer, "Alice Barber Stephens," 247.

¹²⁸ Goodman, "The Plastic Club," 101. Goodman notes that the exhibition "was not only reviewed but praised by virtually every major newspaper in Philadelphia—the *Press*, the *Inquirer*, the *Record*, the *Evening Telegraph*, and the *Ledger*."

¹²⁹ *The Plastic Club Exhibition Catalogue of Paintings and Illustrations by Alice Barber Stephens*, 1898, Box 30, Folder 1, The Plastic Club Records.

¹³⁰ In the late nineteenth century, women were considered to be the sole caretakers of the domestic sphere, and in this role they were the primary shoppers for the family. As such, women soon came to be considered the arbiters of taste and culture. Images like Stephens' *Selecting*

of women evaluating art objects, *Selecting Miniatures* would have been an ideal cover image for the exhibition catalog, but a pen and ink drawing from *John Halifax, Gentleman* (published 1897) was chosen for the cover instead, perhaps due to the Club's limited printing budget and the relative ease of reproducing a pen-and-ink drawing compared to a painting. As Chairman of the Exhibition Committee, and experienced in the business of advertising, Stephens understood the importance of public image and the ability of catalogs to promote that image. It is evident that creating and maintaining a reputation in the public eye was a priority to the rest of the Club members, as well. In the Club's second and third annual reports, the introductory essay explained that "... there is no portion of the Club work which requires more sagacity and tact than the compiling of the Club catalogues... [they] are our introduction to the public and by their character and style we have come to be known as a society wherein good taste prevails."¹³¹

Later exhibition catalogs featured covers that directly called upon the image of the woman artist, such as the image created especially for the cover of the 1899 catalog of the Third Annual Exhibition of Black and White Work and Designs by Cornelia Greenough (d. 1949), which portrays a woman painting at an easel (Fig. 26). Illustrator Jessie Willcox Smith designed a cover for the 1898 catalog of the Second Annual Exhibition of Work in Black and White that recalls Stephens' earlier *Selecting Miniatures* (Fig. 27). Smith's image shows a woman seated on a hardwood floor sorting through large sheaths of paper,

Miniatures, featuring women perusing, inspecting, and purchasing art and other commercial objects, were prevalent during this period. See Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), and Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹³¹ *Second Annual Report 1898, 1899, 1900, and Third Annual Report 1899, 1900, 1901*, Box 33, Folder 2, The Plastic Club Records.

perhaps watercolors, drawings, prints, or a combination of those media. In addition to those works leaning against the wall in front of her, more pieces are scattered about the floor at her feet. As an image created specifically to represent an exhibition of women's work hosted by a women's professional organization that would no doubt receive a large audience of women, Smith's image both recreates the act of curating the exhibition itself and anticipates the viewers' act of looking and examining the art of the Club members. The woman in the image could be viewed as a stand-in for the Club members who acted as curators, the artists who provided the drawings and illustrations, and the women who visited the exhibition, perhaps with the intention of buying the work on display. Indeed, the very act of looking at the catalog's cover image places the viewer into these various positions; the figure faces away from the viewer and we are left to look over her shoulder, joining her in the act of scrutiny.

In 1896, Stephens illustrated "The Woman's Edition," a short story by Bessie Chandler that tells of a group of women socialites who organized a special "woman's edition" of their local newspaper, the *Daily Eagle* (Fig. 28).¹³² At their preliminary meeting, Miss Grace Waters, the only daughter of a prominent family, is elected editor-in-chief because she is "just the one," an unmarried young woman "fresh from college" with fewer familial obligations than the other women. Grace dreams of continuing her studies in hopes of securing a profession "in one of the more conspicuous branches of the world's work," and she struggles to balance this desire with her fear of upsetting traditional social conventions. Grace's internal battle is manifested in a romance with *Daily Eagle* editor, Mr. Terance. Grace, determined to "live [her] own life in [her] own way," rebuffs Mr.

¹³² Bessie Chandler, "The Woman's Edition," *The Ladies' Home Journal* vol. 13, no. 6 (May 1896): 5-6.

Terance's advances because she dislikes his "assertive and domineering" nature and his refusal to take women's work seriously. Her resolve is shaken, however, when the final copy of the woman's edition comes off the press riddled with errors. Grace despairingly questions her own competence, crying, "I thought I could stand alone, and it seems I can't... I'm not good for anything." Mr. Terance orders that the presses be stopped so a new, edited copy be printed, and professes his love to Grace. The story ends when Mr. Terance tells Grace that she has "made a whole new world... a new heaven and a new earth" for him, to which Grace coyly replies, "Is it a 'Woman's Edition,' dear?"¹³³

While the woman's edition was a "great, big, booming success," Chandler's story is more about the challenges that faced young women at this moment: struggling to be taken seriously by society, conquering one's self-doubts, and coming to terms with women's status and role in American history.¹³⁴ It ends with the suggestion that the "whole new world" that Mr. Terance's eyes have been opened to might be one where women have ambition and agency of their own. For the accompanying illustration, Stephens chose to depict the moment when Grace speaks out in the first meeting, resulting in her nomination to be editor-in-chief. The composition is crowded to the edges with seated women in elegant dresses and large hats, all of whom look towards Mrs. Peters as she addresses the crowd from the center of the room. Out of this crowd rises Grace, "a girl with a sweet, strong face," who stands to assertively face Mrs. Peters. Grace's is the only unadorned head

¹³³ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁴ For instance, while reviewing stories and poems for the women's edition, Grace says to Mr. Terance, "When I think of all these little springs of poetry that these good, hard-working, domestic women have been concealing all these years, I could just weep. I'm going to write something about the 'Submerged Sentiment' of middle-aged women. I think it's infinitely more pathetic than General Booth's 'Submerged Tenth'." Grace sees firsthand how women's responsibilities in the home prevent them from actively pursuing creative careers and resolves to do something about it. Ibid., 6.

in the room, and it rises above the rest of the women who lean into each other, murmuring to themselves. Stephens took additional artistic liberties to distinguish Grace from the group; in the text, when Grace delivers the line that gives the illustration its title, “We shall need more women than there are here,” she is still seated. Grace stands a moment later to futilely protest her nomination, but Stephens chose instead to paint a confident, assertive young woman with an expression that hints at no hesitation to leadership or responsibility.¹³⁵

Chandler’s story and Stephens’ illustration provide insight into the phenomenon of “organized womanhood” which was rapidly growing at the end of the nineteenth century. Historian Estelle Freedman has described this time as “an era of separate female organization and institution building, the result on the one hand, of the negative push of discrimination in the public, male sphere, and on the other hand, of the positive attraction of the female world of close, personal relationships and domestic institutional structures.”¹³⁶ The rise of female institutions began with social reform and special interest groups, but quickly spread to other areas, including universities, professional organizations, and even to the creation of separate media outlets.¹³⁷ These institutions arose out of necessity because women were formally excluded from these kinds of institutions in the public sphere. Freedman points to women’s colleges as an example of a separate institution that “encouraged intimate friendships and professional networks among educated women,” and I argue that institutions like The Plastic Club provided this same

¹³⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹³⁶ Estelle Freedman, “Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930,” *Feminist Studies* vol. 5, no. 3 (Fall 1979): 517.

¹³⁷ For more on “organized womanhood” and the women’s club movement, see Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*, and Scott, *Natural Allies*.

kind of emotional and professional support system for women artists.¹³⁸ The value of female institutions, whether they were based in social reform, political activism, professional and academic pursuits, or social interests, is that the women's-only public sphere allowed women to "be free to create their own forms of personal, social, and political relationships."¹³⁹ Furthermore, these institutions provided women with examples of competent female leadership and encouraged independence among their members.¹⁴⁰ Published in a major women's magazine, "The Woman's Edition" and Stephens' illustration highlighted for a mass audience the growing trend of women entering the public sphere through separatist strategies and emphasized the personal and professional rewards that could be gained by doing so.¹⁴¹

In cities around the United States, the move towards separatism as a strategy of sisterhood for women artists manifested in professional organizations like The Plastic Club, which provided the women with a physical space within which to exhibit their work, expand their skill sets by giving and attending public lectures, and to network to find publishers and patrons. In addition to these practical benefits that helped further their careers, The Plastic Club provided members with a community of other aspiring and

¹³⁸ Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy," 518.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 514.

¹⁴⁰ Freedman is concerned with the ways that female institutions resulted in political activism. She argues that they provided the space for women to gain independence and eventually led the way for educated women to demand for "full citizenship for women." Ibid., 518.

¹⁴¹ My interpretation of Chandler's story argues that Mr. Terance's attitude towards women's work is ultimately changed once he understands Grace's aspirations and intellect. My analysis differs remarkably from that of cultural historian Ellen Gruber Garvey. Garvey argues that by the end of the story, it is Grace who "now understands enough about the professional life of her future husband to follow his talk and understand his interests," and that readers are to assume that she will abandon her career aspirations to be a wife, though everything that Chandler's text and Stephens' illustration has told us about Grace's determined character works against this conclusion. Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Representations of Female Authorship," in *American Women Short Story Writers: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Julie Brown (New York: Routledge, 1995), 95.

professional artists who faced the same barriers in the public sphere and constraints at home as they did, becoming a sanctuary for a growing “network of personal friends and professional allies.”¹⁴² Stephens painted the illustration for “The Woman’s Edition” one year before The Plastic Club was formed, but it nevertheless anticipates the founding of the women artists’ society and reflects the larger separatist movement in the United States. Indeed, when that group of hopeful women artists met at PSDW for the first time to discuss what would become The Plastic Club, the scene no doubt resembled Stephens’ image of ladies crowded together in Mrs. Peters’ drawing room. In her characteristic commitment to realism, Stephens carefully delineated each of the women’s faces, a stylistic choice that makes it even easier for viewers to imagine the illustration as a real scene. The Plastic Club met the needs of women artists by providing a physical space in which to meet and discuss the issues of their profession. Much like the special “women’s edition” of the *Daily Eagle*, The Plastic Club, with its multiple exhibitions every year, became a creative outlet for women’s artistic production, led entirely by the women themselves.

Creating a Space in Print: Stephens in the Press

In addition to her role as a teacher at PSDW, as a mentor and studio partner to Harding, and her various leadership roles within The Plastic Club, Stephens also utilized the popular press to encourage and advise other women across the nation. In November of 1893, Stephens contributed an editorial essay to *Woman’s Progress* titled “The Art of Illustrating” in which she gave practical advice to young people who hoped to become illustrators.¹⁴³ Stephens stressed the importance of an academic education in the arts to any

¹⁴² Freedman, “Separatism as Strategy,” 519.

¹⁴³ Stephens, “The Art of Illustrating,” 53-54.

hopeful illustrators, including women. She instructed young students to observe, sketch, and make “constant notes of everything seen” in all media in order to “build up the store of knowledge that the ‘all round’ illustrator is called upon to use.” In her opinion, an artist who could work in multiple media and was proficient in a variety of subjects was more marketable to potential publishers.¹⁴⁴ This was, in fact, Stephens’ own experience; her skills as a both an artist and engraver ensured her many commissions early in her career, and her realist style, perfected through an art curriculum that stressed observation from life and the nude model, was easily adapted to a wide range of story lines and subjects.

Stephens’ essay, in addition to outlining the proper course of study for an aspiring illustrator, also reveals Stephens’ opinions about the contemporary status of illustration as an art form. Like many other artists of the period, Stephens lauded illustration as a “distinct profession,” and viewed the magazine as the perfect platform for both artists and authors to showcase their talents.¹⁴⁵ She asserted illustration as a “field of art, and art, fortunately, it can be called to-day,” a statement that acknowledged that illustration had not always occupied that position. She encouraged her readers to never cease being a student of the arts and emphasized the importance of staying up-to-date on the most recent trends and styles in the field. Above all, she counselled young illustrators to “aim higher” and to “keep a ‘pure art’ side to your ambition,” even if more “news” work must be done to pay the bills.¹⁴⁶ Again, this advice reflects Stephens’ own experience. Early in her career, as a recent graduate of PAFA, Stephens aspired to be a portrait painter. To reach that goal, Stephens accepted commissions as an engraver to support herself and her family

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 54.

financially. Although she ultimately found more success and acclaim as an illustrator, not to mention a much larger audience, Stephens always held her work to the highest of artistic standards, and continued to exhibit all types of work, including oil paintings, pastels, and even photographs, throughout her career.

Woman's Progress had a small readership, circulating mainly in the Philadelphia area, but articles about Stephens were common features in more recognized and widely distributed periodicals as well. More than once, writers acknowledged Stephens' role as an influential mentor and inspiration to younger artists. As one critic observed, "she has a generous admiration for the good in the efforts of others, and a kind word of encouragement to those just entering the art life."¹⁴⁷ Many writers commented on the importance of Stephens' influence on women in particular. In 1903, Stephens was interviewed on the topic of "Girls' Chances as Illustrators." When asked if she thought it was easier for a young girl to succeed in illustration than it was for a young man, Stephens responded, "Well, possibly. Neither girl nor boy can succeed without aptitude and the hardest kind of work, but girls are rather novel in the field, and their work may receive slightly more gentle consideration to begin with. It would not be accepted, however, without merit."¹⁴⁸ Stephens again championed the importance of diligence and skill, regardless of the artist's gender, but she also praised what she saw as an originality that women brought to their illustrative work. She conceded that women's illustrations might be viewed differently by editors than those by their male colleagues but reiterated that women's work would not be accepted if

¹⁴⁷ Guild, "Mrs. Alice Barber Stephens," 10.

¹⁴⁸ Orison Swett Marden, "A School Girl, Not Afraid of Drudgery, Becomes America's Foremost Woman Illustrator," in *Little Visits with Great Americans, or Success, Ideals, and How to Attain Them* (New York: The Success Company, 1903), 323.

it was not up to standard—thereby denying the idea that women may be given preferential treatment because of their gender.

It is Stephens' illustrations that do the most work when it comes to representing how she understood women and their roles in public, professional, and private life. Women illustrators have often been discussed by both contemporary critics and later art historians in terms of the stereotypically feminine subjects they often portrayed, such as children and motherhood. Despite the common tendency to associate women illustrators with these subjects, Stephens rarely depicted children exclusively, and though she was often called upon to illustrate stories about motherhood, her oeuvre is filled with a wide variety of subjects that range from detective novels to historical fiction. For example, in her 1898 solo exhibition at The Plastic Club, Stephens exhibited illustrations from very diverse stories, including Harriet Beecher Stowe's *My Wife and I* and *We and Our Neighbors*; Dinah Craik's novel *John Halifax, Gentleman*; a story by popular fiction writer Bret Harte about a school mistress; and drawings for an article on workers at the Philadelphia Almshouse, to name but a few.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Stephens' many book commissions attest to her mastery of all subject matter. She created imagery for literature of all genres, from Louisa May Alcott's (1832-1888) *Little Women* and children's books by noted author and educator Kate Douglas Wiggin (1856-1923) to works by some of the most acclaimed writers of the nineteenth century, including Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), George Eliot (1819-1880), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ See The Plastic Club, *Catalogue of Paintings and Illustrations by Alice Barber Stephens*, 1898, Box 30, Folder 1, The Plastic Club Records.

¹⁵⁰ Some of the books that Stephens illustrated include an edition of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1903); several editions and versions of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Stark Munro Letters* (first as a series printed in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* (December 1894-May 1895); *Middlemarch* by George Eliot; a special 1900 edition of

Contemporary writers often noted the variety that characterized Stephens' work. For instance, in 1896, Stephens exhibited several works at the Waldorf Hotel in New York that were well-received by the press and publishers. A reporter for *The New York Times* said that Stephens "has had almost every possible subject to illustrate," and Fred B. Schell (1838-1902), the art director of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, wrote to Stephens that "the great number of pictures" at the Waldorf "show[ed] the versatility of which" Stephens was capable.¹⁵¹ Other critics highlighted the variety of Stephens' illustrations more generally by citing the numerous books in different genres that featured her work. In 1904, writer Julius Moritzen observed "that [Stephens] knew no confining limitations is at once evident by contrasting her homely subjects with the virility she brought to bear when Bret Harte's poems were her theme. George Eliot's "Middlemarch"; "John Halifax, Gentleman," by Miss Mulock; Louisa M. Alcott's "Little Women"—these and many others that have been entrusted to her care show sufficient variety to prove her versatility."¹⁵²

Stephens illustrated such an extensive range of subjects that critics had difficulty characterizing her style and often disagreed on what her "favorite" subject matter really was. Art critic Harold Payne remarked that Stephens' "favorite subjects are found in the simple commonplaces of life... The sweet faced young mother, the dimple cheeked infant, the cubby little toddler, or the benevolent, kindly faced old lady in cap and spectacles—

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Marble Faun* in two volumes; a special edition of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1900); and Kate Douglas Wiggin's *The Old Peabody Pew: A Christmas Romance of a Country Church* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1907) and *Susanna and Sue* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909). This is just a small selection of the extensive list of books Stephens illustrated throughout her career.

¹⁵¹ "Illustrative Drawings at the Waldorf Hotel," *The New York Times*, January 15, 1896, 4; Letter from Fred B. Schell to Alice Barber Stephens, January 16, 1896, reel 4152, frame 208, Alice Barber Stephens Papers.

¹⁵² Moritzen, "Some Women Illustrators—Alice Barber Stephens," 46.

these are among the sweet, homely subjects which engage the pencil of this artist.”¹⁵³ In 1893, critic Frederick W. Webber wrote that “homely subjects attract Mrs. Stephens most, and her pictures of old men and women of the Philadelphia almshouse, and the simple-minded people of other localities, are among the best works she has executed.”¹⁵⁴ Art historians have also noted how Stephens’ work “cannot readily be associated with any particular subject genre.”¹⁵⁵ As Goodman has observed, she “moved easily between themes of women and children, illustrations for children’s magazines, and those subjects drawn from and direct to the ‘adult world’,” which ranged from short stories of romance and adventure on the Western frontier, to articles on contemporary politicians and the happenings at the White House.¹⁵⁶ Stephens was often called upon to portray “simple domestic subjects” and she found “character delineation” to be fascinating and even acknowledged that it was perhaps her “best quality.”¹⁵⁷ Her work in these areas was recognized and lauded by critics and artists alike.¹⁵⁸ However, Stephens never felt tied to these subjects, and admitted to desiring “a greater flight of fancy, even a decorative opportunity” that deviated from the realist style she was known for.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Harold Payne, “American Women Illustrators,” *Munsey’s Magazine* vol. 11, no. 1 (April 1894): 48.

¹⁵⁴ Webber, “A Clever Woman Illustrator,” 180.

¹⁵⁵ Goodman, “Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration,” 15.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Bertha E. Mahony and Elinor Whitney, eds., *Contemporary Illustrators of Literature* (Boston: Women’s Educational and Industrial Union, 1930), 70.

¹⁵⁸ See for instance, Armstrong, “The Character Workers.” In 1886, while Stephens was in London, she visited the studio of Belgium painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912). He was familiar with her work in “simple domestic subjects” and told her “he was glad some one [sic] was content to do them.” Mahony and Whitney, eds., *Contemporary Illustrators of Children’s Literature*, 70.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

In addition to the wide-ranging commissions listed above, Stephens created many illustrations for stories and articles that more directly reflected her own experience as a professional woman while also speaking to the broader concerns of the New Woman that emerged in the United States during the 1870s.¹⁶⁰ As a New Woman herself, Stephens' illustrations were often informed by her experiences as a mother, wife, and professional in the public sphere. Stephens made the New Woman the star of *The American Woman*, a series of six paintings commissioned by *The Ladies' Home Journal* that ran every other month through the year of 1897. The magazine advertised the series by exclaiming that Stephens had completed "something never hitherto successfully accomplished... In full-page pictures superbly painted, Mrs. Stephens portrays six types of American Woman as she is."¹⁶¹ The paintings depict the (white, middle-class) American woman in a variety of settings: *The Woman in Society*, *The Woman in Religion*, *The Woman in the Home*, *The American Girl in Summer*, *The Woman in Business*, and *The Beauty of Motherhood* (Figs. 29-34). The illustrations were featured on the magazine's frontispieces, or "second cover,"

¹⁶⁰ As historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has argued, the New Woman was more than a cultural construct made popular by the media. She also "constituted a revolutionary demographic and political phenomenon" that affected real change within American society. The New Woman eschewed marriage to follow her professional ambitions; she was modern, ambitious, educated, and autonomous. Most importantly, the New Woman was free from the restraints known as the Cult of True Womanhood—the societal prescription that women be pious, domestic, submissive, and chaste—that kept her mother's generation locked inside the domestic sphere. Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 245. For more on the theory of the Cult of True Womanhood, also referred to as the Cult of Domesticity, see Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*; Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976); and idem, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151-174.

¹⁶¹ "Six Types of the American Woman by Alice Barber Stephens," *The Ladies' Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 1 (December 1896): n.p.

and they were intended to stand alone as “complete and beautiful” pictures.¹⁶² Readers were encouraged to clip the illustrations to hang in their homes as art.¹⁶³

The American Woman series received much attention after it was published and has since come to be known as some of Stephens’ best work. The series has been described as the collection of illustrations that “most contributed to Stephens’ popularity,” although by the time it was published, Stephens was already widely sought after by authors and publishers alike, and her work was featured regularly in all the major publications, including *Harper’s*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Century*, and *Scribner’s*.¹⁶⁴ Historian Carolyn Kitch has argued that *The American Woman* series was “among the first visual commentaries on gender—on what an ‘American Woman’ looked like—in a truly national mass medium,” although it should be noted that Stephens, her editors, and the readers of these periodicals limited themselves to a representation of the American woman who was unquestionably white and middle-class.¹⁶⁵

The Woman in Business, published in the September 1897 issue of *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, is the fifth in the series (Fig. 33). The painting depicts the magazine’s version of the American Woman at a sales counter in John Wanamaker’s Store, inspecting and perhaps contemplating the purchase of the white fabric offered to her by a sales clerk whose stiff posture, plain dress, and older appearance contrasts with the elegant dress and youthful beauty of the comfortably relaxed American Woman. *Woman in Business* is familiar in its portrayal of women consumers, a popular subject for both painters and

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Carolyn Kitch, “The American Woman Series: Gender and Class in *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, 1897,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* vol. 75, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 243.

¹⁶⁴ Brown, *Alice Barber Stephens*, 24.

¹⁶⁵ Kitch, “The American Woman Series,” 243.

illustrators alike, and recalls Stephens' earlier illustration of 1895, *Selecting Miniatures* (see Fig. 25). The scene and its clever title referring to "business" point to the New Woman's larger role in society as the main consumer for the home, as well as to the emergence of the department store that was spurred by the industrialization of late-nineteenth century America. It also references the fact that a growing number of women were working outside the home in order to earn an income, as imaged by the number of female sales clerks behind the store counter.

While many historians have acknowledged the influence of the New Woman in both art and broader culture, very little scholarship exists on female illustrators' representation of the New Woman figure.¹⁶⁶ Art historian Patricia Smith Scanlan, who has written extensively about women illustrators in Philadelphia more broadly, is the exception. She has argued that Stephens and "her fellow Philadelphia women illustrators brought a 'particular force of ... experience' to their work that set it apart from that of

¹⁶⁶ Much of the historical scholarship related to the New Woman in art and visual culture revolves around the representation of women by male artists in the late nineteenth century or is devoted to modernist painters who worked in the early decades of the twentieth century in major art centers like New York and Boston. See Holly Pyne Connor, ed., *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase, and Sargent* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Erica E. Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications, 2001); Marian Wardle, ed., *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005). Alternatively, literary scholar Martha Banta provides an overview of the representation of the New Woman in the popular press and literature but lacks in-depth analysis of the artists or the images themselves. Martha Banta, *Imaging American Women: Ideas and Ideals in Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). Similarly, many cultural histories of the New Woman in the popular press attend primarily to *how* she is represented (and most often by male artists) rather than *who* is representing her. See Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1990); and Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

contemporary male illustrators.”¹⁶⁷ Their illustrations were informed by their complicated experiences as professional women in a male-dominated field, resulting in a “complex amalgam of self-determined identities” that for Stephens included women navigating domestic life, the professional sphere, and even the western frontier.¹⁶⁸

Unfortunately, many scholars have dismissed the work of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century women illustrators because of the so-called “sentimental” quality of their work. Women’s and gender studies scholar Barbara Balliet has tied women illustrators exclusively to “pictures associating white femininity with domesticity and sentimentality.”¹⁶⁹ Although Baillet acknowledges that women’s entrance into the art world via the field of mass media “challenges us to rethink normative descriptions of nineteenth-century white, middle-class women as homebound,” she ultimately claims that their illustrations for the masses actually “did much to cement the connection to gender as the line dividing the white, middle-class world into a male public and female private.”¹⁷⁰ Arguments like Baillet’s have the result of reproducing and reinforcing traditional beliefs about women’s roles in American public and private life and denying the real-life experiences faced by professional women. These kinds of analyses are limiting and are rooted in an overgeneralization of women’s artistic production of this period.

It is true that some women illustrators are known for certain “feminine” themes, and that women were more likely than their male colleagues to be chosen by editors to

¹⁶⁷ Scanlan, “‘God-Gifted Girls’,” 229. Quote from Rosemary Betterton, “How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon,” in *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media* (London: Pandora Press, 1987), 222-223.

¹⁶⁸ Scanlan, “‘God-Gifted Girls’,” 230.

¹⁶⁹ Barbara J. Balliet, “Reproducing Gender in Nineteenth-Century Illustrations,” *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* vol. 60 (2003): 65.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

illustrate stories about motherhood and children.¹⁷¹ However, most women, including Stephens, portrayed a variety of subjects and oftentimes deviated from so-called “feminine” themes. Furthermore, it is a common assumption that all women illustrators chose sentimental themes like motherhood, domesticity, and childhood, when in most cases they were given assignments that dictated their subject matter. This assumption that the sentimental assignments that women were most likely to be assigned were truly favored by the illustrators themselves is an oversimplification that ignores what the broad base of illustrators were actually creating.¹⁷² These assumptions and arguments like Baillet’s leave no room for the very unique and individual careers of specific illustrators and ignore the extensive array of subjects that many women illustrators pursued throughout their careers. The result is that the potential effects of illustrations of the New Woman (or the professional woman, suffragette, or any other non-traditional role) created by women artists are overlooked, which produces an inaccurate portrayal of the role that women’s illustrations made in the lives of readers.

Stephens’ *The Women’s Life Class*; *Selecting Miniatures*; and her illustrations for “Three Chapters,” “The Woman’s Edition,” and *The American Woman* series offer insight into the everyday lives of women with creative aspirations at the time, and are not an anomaly in Stephens’ oeuvre or in women’s illustrations in general as Balliet has argued.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ For instance, Jessie Willcox Smith is often referred to as the “painter of children.”

¹⁷² As Masten has noted, “women illustrators often portrayed the world of women and children for ‘business’ reasons, but this topic was not necessarily constraining. Some women artists approached images of female figures as an opportunity to develop new feminine ideals through design and execution.” When viewed this way, images of women by women, even if the women are portrayed in a home or with children, can be opened to more complex interpretations that allow for a more varied understanding of women’s lived experiences. Masten, *Art Work*, 175.

¹⁷³ Balliet cites *The Women’s Life Class* as a “rare” example of women illustrators “depict[ing] their own activities.” Balliet’s argument would only work if the only activity that women illustrators participated in was academy classes (which were, in fact, commonly documented in

Images of the female artist abound in late-nineteenth-century popular culture. Women artists were popular main characters in literature and short stories, and magazines frequently featured interviews, stories, and photo-essays devoted to women artists of the period. One reason there is not an overabundance of illustrations like *The Women's Life Class* is because the lives of women artists were much more varied than that. They organized clubs, taught classes, hosted and attended social events, attended meetings, cared for their families, and operated in an increasingly commercial and business-oriented art world much in the same way as their male peers, and these experiences informed their work. These types of images *do* appear in the historical record, if one takes the time to look, and *The American Woman* series is a perfect example.

In 1904, Stephens moved with her husband and son to the Philadelphia suburb of Rose Valley, but her involvement in the city's art scene did not end. With her career established, Stephens' move was motivated by a desire to raise her only child in a healthy environment outside the city center. However, unlike many women who ceased working once they were married, Stephens accepted commissions until old age prevented her from painting, stopping only briefly during the United States' involvement in World War I. From her home in Rose Valley, Stephens continued to make her presence known in art circles both large and small. Stephens' work and her personal and professional life remained a common feature in popular periodicals; her home and studio were often written about in

the popular press). She also wrongly describes *The Women's Life Class* as "a view of [Stephens'] life drawing class at the Philadelphia School of Design," when it actually documents one of Eakins' classes at PAFA, as the article it accompanies makes clear. Balliet, "Reproducing Gender in Nineteenth-Century Illustrations," 86.

magazines of all types. She also continued to hold leadership roles in The Plastic Club, remaining an active, dedicated member of the organization until the late 1920s.

In spite of the many obstacles women artists faced in the public world of art, commerce, and publishing, Stephens' career is an example of professional success. Stephens served as a leader in her field, collaborating with her peers to break down barriers and leading the way for generations of women artists to follow in her footsteps. However, Stephens did not work in a bubble, nor were her collaborative strategies exclusive to women illustrators working in Philadelphia. Outside of Philadelphia, women were gaining admittance to art academies and starting their own educational institutions across the country. Professional artists' organizations much like The Plastic Club flourished in large urban cities and small towns alike, some of which continue to operate today. Women artists from all backgrounds, working in all media, and in all areas of the United States were actively working to forge successful professional careers and to permanently change those spaces that were previously closed to them, and they utilized strategies of sisterhood to achieve their goals.

CHAPTER TWO

Enid Yandell: Negotiating Independent and Collective Agency as a “Famous Lady Sculptor”¹⁷⁴

In February of 1897, *The Courier-Journal* published a striking photograph of sculptor Enid Yandell in her Paris studio under the headline, “Largest Statue Ever Made by a Woman” (Figs. 35-36).¹⁷⁵ In the photograph, a colossal statue of the Greek goddess Athena dwarfs the young artist, who stands confidently in front of her work-in-progress. Yandell gazes towards the photographer with one hand propped on her right hip and her mallet in the other hand, as if slightly perturbed to be interrupted from her work. The statue’s bust is located on the floor at Yandell’s right, standing nearly twice as tall as its sculptor. Though the carved goddess towers over Yandell, Athena appears to bow her head in deference to her creator.

The Courier-Journal pictured Yandell in the process of finishing what newspapers referred to as her “greatest endeavor.”¹⁷⁶ When completed, the seventy-five-foot-tall *Pallas*

¹⁷⁴ “The Art of the Age—A Famous Lady Sculptor,” *Pearson’s Magazine* vol. 8, no. 44 (August 1899): 188.

¹⁷⁵ “Largest Statue Ever Made by a Woman,” *The Courier-Journal*, February 21, 1897, Section 4, 2.

¹⁷⁶ “An American Sculptress’ Work,” *The Inter Ocean*, January 31, 1897, 27. *Pallas Athena* was reportedly modeled after the colossal statue of Athena in the Parthenon. For inspiration, Yandell drew upon her visits to the Louvre, where she saw the *Athena of Velletri*, a Roman copy of a Greek bronze original. Yandell might also have been influenced by *The Republic*, the 65-foot tall allegorical statue by Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) at the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. Clippings and photographs of these two works can be found in Yandell’s personal scrapbooks, along with clippings of several other monumental, frontally-oriented sculptures that varied in style, ranging from the classically-inspired to more modern, suggesting that Yandell

Athena stood as the centerpiece of the 1897 Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition in Nashville (Figs. 37-38). In addition to greeting visitors in Centennial Park and serving as the backdrop for Exposition ceremonies and tourists' photographs, Yandell's "Mammoth Statue of Minerva" also appeared in promotional materials for the Exposition (Figs. 39-40). The public applauded Yandell and her *Pallas Athena*, with newspapers from New York to Alabama repeatedly emphasizing the novel fact that it was the largest sculpture to date ever created by a woman.

Pallas Athena propelled Yandell to international fame, resulting in consistent public and private commissions for the rest of her career. However, as a monumental, classical statue of a woman created in a studio full of assistants, *Pallas Athena* was the culmination of Yandell's early experiences as a young woman sculptor even as it led to her eventual success. To complete *Pallas Athena*, Yandell relied on her academic education, which stressed both traditional modes of production and contemporary ideology, as well as her prior involvement in the Chicago World's Fair, where she worked alongside other women sculptors to gain the skills needed to sculpt on such a massive scale. Thus, by 1897, following her accomplishments at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and building upon her traditional art education and experience working in modern techniques, Yandell was perfectly prepared to take on a public project of this magnitude.

Over the course of her career, Yandell created both large-scale, commemorative monuments and fountains, as well as decorative sculptures for domestic spaces and private gardens. She was among the first women members of the National Sculpture Society and

drew on multiple sources for her inspiration. See vol. 76, *The Papers of Enid Bland Yandell, 1869-1934*, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky (hereafter cited as "Enid Yandell Papers").

her work was featured in numerous international expositions and World's Fairs, including the 1913 Armory Show. Yandell's work was highly acclaimed during her lifetime, and today her public sculptures can be found across the country, from Rhode Island to Tennessee. This chapter examines the unique ways Yandell utilized strategies of sisterhood to achieve such success in a male-dominated field while negotiating her identity as a Southern-born, unmarried, woman sculptor. These strategies included sharing studio spaces and commissions; sharing living spaces (or "baching"); creating female-based support systems and professional connections; and using her platform as a recognized woman artist to promote the work of her peers and to encourage other women to enter into the field. Furthermore, her sculptural projects, whether they took the form of large-scale monumental commissions for World's Fairs or decorative pieces designed for the parlor, consistently spoke to and for women's experience in both their subject matter, function, and even their locations. By more closely examining Yandell's career and influence, this chapter ultimately reclaims Yandell's significant legacy as a modern sculptor whose work blurred the boundaries between realism, Art Nouveau, commercial art, Neoclassicism, and monumental public sculpture.

The first part of this chapter examines the early years of Yandell's sculptural career, particularly her involvement in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, and how those experiences shaped the rest of her career. It was in Chicago that Yandell first utilized strategies of sisterhood such as collaboration and sharing commissions; establishing a place within a community of women sculptors and other young professionals by baching and sharing studio spaces; and, in her caryatids for the Woman's Building, representing women through modern and traditional styles. Yandell relied upon the professional connections

and invaluable experience she gained working within women artists' circles in Chicago to eventually carve out a significant space for herself in the larger, male-dominated art communities of Paris and New York. The second part of this chapter analyzes Yandell's later work to argue that many of the same themes of sisterhood, community, and representation that characterized her early experiences in Chicago reappear throughout her long career. After examining how Yandell used monumental, memorial sculptures to situate and ensure women's representation in the public sphere, I analyze examples of Yandell's garden sculptures and portrait figurines to show how she made art for women's private and domestic spaces. The latter works participated in the "invention" of a new genre of modern American sculpture that was specific to women sculptors. By providing a more in-depth analysis of a select group of Yandell's works than has yet been provided by art historians, this chapter allows for a greater understanding of the significance of Yandell's work. Yandell's extensive oeuvre, with its blend of Neoclassical and contemporary styles and subjects used on both large-scale, public monuments and smaller, decorative "parlor" pieces, represents a uniquely American and quite modern mode of sculptural production.

Yandell's experience as a woman artist at the turn of the twentieth century was different from Alice Barber Stephens' for a variety of reasons, and this meant that Yandell utilized strategies of sisterhood in different ways as well. Unlike Stephens, who helped create a path for future illustrators to follow in her footsteps, Yandell was preceded by an earlier generation of American expatriate women sculptors that included Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908) and Edmonia Lewis (c. 1844-1907), who had already familiarized the American public with the (somewhat romanticized) idea of the "lady sculptor."¹⁷⁷ Because

¹⁷⁷ For more on this group of sculptors, whom the American novelist Henry James (1843-1916) famously referred to as the "white, marmorean flock," see Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., et. al., *The White*

Yandell worked in a much more established medium—the fine art of sculpture, particularly large-scale commemorative, public works—the constraints placed on Yandell’s career did not have so much to do with arguing for the legitimacy of her art form as much as they did with proving herself as a skilled and capable woman working in a traditionally male-dominated field. Furthermore, Yandell was a member of a younger generation of women artists who took advantage of the doors that had been opened for them by their predecessors (like Stephens). They did not have to fight to gain admission into art academies, for instance, since the policies that prohibited women’s enrollment had been largely abolished or at least modified almost a decade before Yandell and other women of her generation entered their formal educations.

Moreover, whereas Stephens eventually took on the traditional feminine duties of marriage and motherhood, Yandell never married, choosing instead to negotiate the complex social structures of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as an “unmarried woman.” This independence meant that she relied completely on her sculptural career for financial support; that she could move more freely without the restraints of familial responsibilities; and that she faced expectations of womanhood and experienced life as a New Woman in different ways than her married colleagues. Yandell was able to support herself and succeed in a male-dominated field for a number of reasons; her familial

Marmorean Flock: Nineteenth-Century American Women Neoclassical Sculptors (Poughkeepsie, New York: Vassar College Art Gallery, 1972); Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*; Nancy Elizabeth Proctor, “American Women Sculptors in Rome in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Feminist and Psychoanalytical Readings of a Displaced Cannon” (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 1998); Jane Mayo Roos, “Another Look at Henry James and the ‘White Marmorean Flock’,” *Woman’s Art Journal* vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 1983): 29-34; Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors: A History of Women Working in Three Dimensions* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990), 32-92; and Margaret Farrand Thorp, “The White, Marmorean Flock,” *The New England Quarterly* vol. 32, no. 2 (June 1959): 147-169.

and professional connections, her wealthy patrons, her single-woman status, her choice of subject matter, and her high-profile monumental public works all aided in her success. In turn, her success gave her a platform that she used to encourage and support other women sculptors. Through her work and her writing, and through the relationships she made with other women artists, Yandell helped to create a pathway for future generations of female sculptors.

The popular press covered Yandell and her work from her debut on the American art scene in the late 1880s until World War I, when she abandoned her career as a sculptor in favor of philanthropic work with the Red Cross. Major newspapers based in the art centers of New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, as well as newspapers in cities where she had familial connections, like Louisville and Nashville, made Yandell the topic of extensive articles and reviews. In addition to her significant presence in newspapers, she was also regularly featured in a variety of national and regional periodicals, including both special interest magazines and art journals, including *Good Housekeeping*, *The Southern Magazine*, *Confederate Veteran*, *Arts and Decoration*, *Brush and Pencil*, and *Pearson's Magazine*.¹⁷⁸ Writers, art critics, and reporters repeatedly touted Yandell as one of America's leading sculptors of the period. When she was just twenty-five years old, newspapers across the country reported that Yandell had already "won more distinction than half the women double her age" and that she was in the process of becoming "one of America's foremost women sculptors."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Stephanie W. Darst, "Art's Bachelor Maid: The Sculpture of Enid Yandell" (MFA thesis, University of Louisville, 1993), 5. Darst estimates that over two hundred articles were written about Yandell throughout her career.

¹⁷⁹ "Pretty Paris Art Students," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 19, 1895, 26; "A Day Among Girl Artists—American Pupils in Madame Vittie's New School in Paris," *The Philadelphia Press*, May 19, 1895.

Despite Yandell's significant reputation during her own lifetime, there has been little scholarly recognition of her widespread influence. Indeed, since her death in 1934, Yandell has been all but written out of the history of American art. While there have been monographs and retrospective exhibitions dedicated to several of Yandell's contemporaries, including Bessie Potter Vonnoh and Helen Farnsworth Mears (1872-1916), scholarship on Yandell is limited to a few articles, two small exhibition catalogs, and one Master's thesis, all of which are largely concerned with reconstructing the artist's biography.¹⁸⁰ Historian Nancy Disher Baird's comprehensive essay of 1988 is valuable as an exclusively historical account of Yandell's career and a detailed reconstruction of her family history, but it neglects to carefully consider Yandell's artistic production.¹⁸¹ The most thorough analysis of Yandell's career has been compiled by Stephanie Darst, whose Master's thesis for the University of Louisville served as the major reference for a catalog that accompanied a small exhibition of Yandell's work from the permanent collection of the Speed Art Museum.¹⁸² More recently, art historian and museum studies scholar Juilee Decker has written about Yandell's public image and work in relation to the concept of the "pioneer." Although Decker's analysis emphasizes Yandell's unique influence as a Southern woman sculptor, it neglects to consider Yandell's sculptural work in relation to

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, Aronson, *Bessie Potter Vonnoh: Sculptor of Women*; Susan Porter Green, *Helen Farnsworth Mears* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin: Paine Art Center and Arboretum, 1972).

¹⁸¹ Baird, "Enid Yandell," 5-31.

¹⁸² Darst, "Art's Bachelor Maid," and idem, *The Sculpture of Enid Yandell* (Louisville, Kentucky: The J. B. Speed Art Museum, 1993). The Speed Art Museum, formerly the J. B. Speed Art Museum, owns fourteen of Yandell's sculptures, the largest collection of Yandell's known works.

broad trends in American art of the period or in relation to the work of her fellow women sculptors.¹⁸³

When Yandell has been considered in recent scholarship, art historians have portrayed her as a mere follower of the canonical male sculptors with whom she worked, particularly Lorado Taft (1860-1936), Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), and Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907). However, my analysis of Yandell's working methods and professional relationships, as well as several of her most understudied works and their contemporary reception, allows for a more nuanced understanding of Yandell and the larger community of American women sculptors of which she was a part. It is true that Yandell was indebted to the styles of her "masters," including Phillip Martiny (1858-1927), and contemporary writers often compared her work to that of her former teachers.¹⁸⁴ However, just as often, discussions of Yandell's work were included alongside that of her female peers, with whom she had more in common in terms of subject matter, mode of production, and even patrons. In fact, Yandell and other women sculptors were credited with developing certain sculptural trends, which contradicts any notion that they might be "following" in the footsteps of their male colleagues.

Yandell was born on October 6, 1869, in Louisville, Kentucky. Her father, Dr. Lunsford Pitts Yandell, Jr. (1837-1884), was an esteemed surgeon and her mother, Louise

¹⁸³ Juilee Decker, "Enid Yandell (1869-1934): Kentucky's Frontier Sculptor and 'Bachelor Maid'," in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Thomas Appleton and Melissa A. McEuen (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 196-218.

¹⁸⁴ Yandell worked under Martiny in Taft's studio during the World's Fair. Yandell later recalled this experience in the New York newspaper, *The Sun*, referring to Martiny as her "master." Desirée B. Caldwell, *Enid Yandell and the Branstock School* (Providence, Rhode Island: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1982), 3; "A Kentucky Girl's Art," *The Sun*, February 27, 1898, 16.

Elliston Yandell (1844-1908) worked as a social worker and an occasional painter (Fig. 41).¹⁸⁵ The Yandell and Elliston families were well-respected, affluent, and encouraging of Enid's artistic talent, which, as several contemporary accounts reported, became evident at an early age.¹⁸⁶ Yandell began studying art at age twelve, and specialized in art and chemistry at Hampton College in Louisville; her formal, academic art education began in 1887 when she enrolled in the Art Academy of Cincinnati at eighteen years old.¹⁸⁷ There, Yandell participated in coeducational classes and studied under English-born woodcarver Benn Pitman (1822-1910) and Italian sculptor Louis Rebisso (1837-1899). Pitman was strongly influenced by art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) and was active in the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States. Like Ruskin, Pitman encouraged his students to "study indigenous plants and work with native woods."¹⁸⁸ Rebisso, on the other hand, was known for his monumental, commemorative bronze sculptures inspired by classical statuary and he approached art education in a more conventional manner. Under Rebisso,

¹⁸⁵ Yandell would later credit "heredity" as a major reason for her artistic skill in an interview for a New York newspaper. The reporter elaborated, explaining that Yandell's father was "one of the most dexterous and skillful" surgeons of his day and that "all that marvelous delicacy of touch which made his surgical work remarkable seems to have been inherited by his daughter, who, following art as a career, has made the family name as notable in the field of sculpture as it was once in the realm of medicine." "When a Kiss is Not a Kiss," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 14, 1901, 16.

¹⁸⁶ A Chicago paper reported that Yandell had "been a modeler, a sculptress, since she was old enough to attend kindergarten. When other children were making balls and cubes out of clay... she was modeling figures of men and women." A later writer noted in *Pearson's Magazine* that as a child, Yandell exhibited a "natural tendency" that "was almost inborn." See "Work of a Woman," *Chicago Morning News*, September 19, 1891, vol. 94, pg. 50, Enid Yandell Papers; "The Art of the Age," 187.

¹⁸⁷ "A Southern Girl at the World's Fair," *Confederate Veteran* vol. 1, no. 11 (November 1893): 324; C., "The Bachelor Maid in Art," *The Southern Magazine* vol. 5 (February 1895): 505.

¹⁸⁸ Darst, "Art's Bachelor Maid," 9-10. For more on Pitman, see Cincinnati Art Museum, *The Ladies, God Bless 'Em* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1976), 65-66; Kenneth R. Trapp, "'To Beautify the Useful': Benn Pitman and the Women's Woodcarving Movement in Cincinnati in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth Century* vol. 8 (1982): 175-192.

Yandell was “provided with traditional academic models—copies of Greek and Roman sculpture” as well as access to the nude model.¹⁸⁹

Two of Yandell’s early projects completed while still a student at the Academy exemplify these two different influences: a series of nine oak and maple panels created for an office desk and a small-scale, marble sculpture of Hermes.¹⁹⁰ The desk panels were commissioned by the offices of Barbee and Castleman, a Louisville insurance company with ties to the Yandell family. Yandell utilized curving lines and plant motifs that recalled Pitman’s work but were described by a local newspaper as done “in the style of the Italian Renaissance” (Fig. 42).¹⁹¹ Yandell’s *Hermes*, with its classical subject and medium, was acclaimed for its traditional qualities (Fig. 43). It was awarded the Senior Award by the Academy in 1889 and was exhibited at the Cincinnati Art Museum that same year. One reporter described the sculpture as “full of life, fire, and fine modeling, grace, and perfect symmetry of proportion.”¹⁹² Though some viewers were shocked that such a fine sculpture could be produced by such a young woman—one writer observed that “when this statue was exhibited... the art-public was incredulous that it had been executed by a girl of twenty”—many more praised Yandell’s skill.¹⁹³ One publication acknowledged that *Hermes* had “secur[ed] for [Yandell] a position at once among professional workers,” while

¹⁸⁹ Darst, “Art’s Bachelor Maid,” 10-11.

¹⁹⁰ These two works are now lost. The only surviving image of the carved wooden desk is a reproduction printed in C., “The Bachelor Maid in Art,” 504. This article described the panels as “complexly beautiful in design and execution.” Two photographs of *Hermes* are in the Enid Bland Yandell Photograph Collection (Box 2, Folder 29), The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky (hereafter cited as “Enid Yandell Photographs”).

¹⁹¹ Unidentified clipping, *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 1889, vol. 94, pg. 41, Enid Yandell Papers.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ C., “Bachelor Maid in Art,” 505. Another reporter stated that “it is almost impossible to believe that it is the creation of one so young.” Unidentified clipping, *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 1889, vol. 94, pg. 41, Enid Yandell Papers.

another lauded her as “one of the most promising pupils the Art Academy of Cincinnati has ever had the honor of naming among its students.”¹⁹⁴ In fact, Yandell was such a committed, hardworking student that she graduated from the Academy’s four-year program in only two years. Her education in Cincinnati was formative; throughout her career, Yandell consistently blurred the boundaries between a realist approach to contemporary ideas influenced by Ruskin’s Arts and Crafts ideology and a Neoclassical application of classical styles and subjects.

After graduating from the Art Academy of Cincinnati, Yandell travelled to Europe for six weeks with her mother and younger sister, Elsie Yandell (1876-1939), before moving back to Louisville to begin her career as a sculptor. Between 1889 and 1891, Yandell lived with her mother while completing small commissions for family friends, community leaders, and local businesses that included portrait busts and architectural decorations.¹⁹⁵ Yandell found her break in August of 1891, when she travelled to Chicago to work for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition at the request of Bertha Honoré Palmer (1849-1918), another Kentucky native with whom Yandell shared personal and professional connections. Palmer was the President of the Board of Lady Managers, the committee of women who oversaw the construction of the Woman’s Building, a fair structure dedicated to the achievements of women that was planned, funded, managed, and decorated entirely by women organizers and artists (Fig. 44).¹⁹⁶ In that position, Palmer

¹⁹⁴ Unidentified clipping, *The Elite News*, October 1892, 5, vol. 94, pg. 62, Enid Yandell Papers; Unidentified clipping, *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 1889, vol. 94, pg. 41, Enid Yandell Papers.

¹⁹⁵ For the most complete catalogue raisonné of Yandell’s work, see Darst, “The Sculpture of Enid Yandell,” 25-28.

¹⁹⁶ The Woman’s Building was the second fair building of its kind in the United States, following in the tradition set by the Women’s Pavilion at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. However, as art historian Wanda Corn has noted, the Woman’s Building in Chicago was “the only artistic event of the century in which women, in a loosely formed collective, decorated an

wielded significant influence over the design of the building and its associated programming, which enabled her to provide Yandell with her first public commission: the twenty-four caryatids that decorated the Woman's Building's façade and supported its roof garden. While in Chicago, Yandell took advantage of "baching," or sharing a living space, with two other young women who were also working in various capacities on the Woman's Building. With her roommates, she co-wrote and published a fictional novel based on their shared experiences living in the city as young "bachelor maids." The success of Yandell's caryatids led to more commissions; she worked closely with a group of women sculptors as studio assistants to prominent American sculptor Lorado Taft and secured a solo commission for a monumental statue of Daniel Boone that would grace the lawn of the Kentucky State Building.¹⁹⁷ These early experiences with strategic sisterhood in Chicago provided Yandell with a strong foundation from which to launch her career.

The Woman's Building Caryatids

entire hall." This achievement was acknowledged by contemporary observers as well. Major Benjamin C. Truman (1835-1916), in *History of the World's Fair*, wrote that "In no previous exposition has woman essayed so important and conspicuous a part as she has been called upon to perform at the Great Columbian Exposition of 1893. At no time in her history has she been accorded such a place as she now occupies as an integral part of a mammoth display of the achievements of mankind." Wanda M. Corn, *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2011), 9; Benjamin C. Truman, *History of the World's Fair, Being a Complete and Authentic Description of the Columbian Exposition from Its Inception* (Chicago: Mammoth, 1893; reprint, New York: Adorno Press, 1976), 163. The Woman's Building has been a focal point of much historical scholarship in a wide range of disciplines, including art history, women's and gender studies, American history, English, and Library and Information Studies. See, for instance, Boisseau, "Where Every Woman May Be a Queen," and Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981).

¹⁹⁷ For more on *Daniel Boone*, which was permanently cast in bronze in 1906 and is now located in Louisville's Cherokee Park, see Baird, 12-14, 26; Decker, "Enid Yandell," 196-198, 202-205, 210.

Palmer had originally requested that Yandell sculpt the interior relief decoration for the Woman's Building, which was designed by first-time architect Sophia Hayden (1868-1953). Upon Yandell's arrival in Chicago, however, Palmer assigned her to craft the caryatid figures that provided support for the Woman's Building's rooftop garden (Figs. 45-46).¹⁹⁸ Yandell was ultimately awarded a Gold Designer's Medal for these caryatids, becoming one of only three women to receive this award at the Fair.¹⁹⁹ The eight-feet tall caryatids decorated the enclosures of the north and south pavilion roofs and were composed of staff, a mixture of plaster of Paris and cement used for temporary buildings at the Fair. For this project, Yandell represented the kind of thoroughly classical subject that had become popular once again for nineteenth-century American sculptors, particularly for grand expositions. Yandell was inspired by the caryatids on the famous "Porch of the Maidens," part of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis in Athens, Greece (421-407 BCE), but she also turned to contemporary sources as her models (Fig. 47). Images of the Erechtheion caryatids can be found in her scrapbooks from this period, as well as a drawing by Kenyon Cox (1856-1919) of the design for the caryatids used in the Skidmore Fountain in Portland, Oregon, and a clipping of the caryatids above the entrance of the American Surety Building

¹⁹⁸ The last-minute change in Yandell's assignment could be attributed to the fact that the rooftop garden was not in the early plans for the Woman's Building. It was added to the original plan later to allow more room for visitors, perhaps at Palmer's suggestion. The rooftop garden, along with the several other parlors and balconies in the Woman's Building, was intended to be used for "reading, writing, committee, club, and press rooms." Isabel McDougal, "Woman's Work at the World's Fair," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* vol. 35, no. 6 (June 1893): 642, 646. For more on the original design and the subsequent changes involving the caryatids, see Charlene G. Garfinkle, "Women at Work: The Design and Decoration of the Woman's Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition—Architecture, Exterior Sculpture, Stained Glass, and Interior Murals" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1996), 86-87. For images and the floor plan of Hayden's original design, see *The Inland Architect and News Record* vol. 17, no. 2 (March 1891): n.p.

¹⁹⁹ A total of seventy-three medals were awarded to "Designers of the Columbian Exposition." The other women who were awarded a Gold Designer's Medal were Palmer and Hayden. C., "The Bachelor Maid in Art," 506.

in New York (Figs. 48-50).²⁰⁰ Yandell also kept small models of classical sculptures in her studio space, including a miniature version of *Venus de Milo*.

Like their ancient predecessors and the caryatids on the American Surety Building, Yandell modeled different forms of the maiden figures and then alternated them along the roofline. Yandell's caryatids were destroyed after the Fair, but a photograph of Yandell at work in the Jackson Park sculpture studio gives insight into her design (Fig. 51). The maiden stands tall in a classical *contrapposto* pose, with her straight right arm and leg counterbalanced with a bent left arm and leg. The drapery of her skirt is folded over the crook in her left elbow as her hand, slightly open, rests on her abdomen. She steps forward with her left leg, and her toes are visible as they protrude just barely over the small, square base of the column and into the viewers' space. Another contemporary photograph of the Woman's Building during construction provides an alternate angle, revealing that Yandell positioned the caryatids' arms slightly behind their bodies so that they wrapped around the corners of the supporting pillars behind them (see Fig. 46). Thus, the caryatids are simultaneously stepping away from and blending into the building they were intended to support, a tension that is unique to Yandell's design. Also unique is the style and folds of the *peplos* worn by Yandell's caryatids, which are gathered to one side and held by the figures rather than draping downward in symmetrical folds. The Woman's Building caryatids allowed Yandell to exhibit her skill in sculpting folded drapery, the body underneath, and how each interacted with the other.

Yandell placed these classical maidens in a modern context, elevated on a grand-scale on the roofline of the Woman's Building, which stood as a monument to "the progress

²⁰⁰ See vol. 76, pages 15, 85, 88-89, Enid Yandell Papers.

women have made during the nineteenth century.”²⁰¹ Art historian Charlene G. Garfinkle argues that the decision to include caryatids in the updated design of the Woman’s Building may have been related to “Palmer’s or Hayden’s desire to create a building which speaks its function.”²⁰² To support her argument, Garfinkle references the claims made by activist, art patron, and writer Maud Howe Elliot (1854-1948) in *Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition* (1893), the official publication of the Board of Lady Managers.²⁰³ In an essay describing the design of the Woman’s Building and its decorations in extensive detail, Elliot stated that “a work of art is precious in so far as it expresses the personality of its creator. Architecture is one of the arts most subservient to use, and a building should not only express the genius of the architect but the purpose to which it is dedicated.”²⁰⁴ As a building intended to showcase women’s advances towards equality in industry, business, science, and the arts, the choice to include women as structural supports of the Building’s roof worked to visibly extend the metaphor of the strength of women. Yandell’s caryatids, which hide the supporting pillars from view of the visitors below, illustrate quite literally Elliot’s assertion that the Woman’s Building was an “essentially feminine” building with a “strength [that] is veiled in grace.”²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Enid Yandell, Laura Hayes, and Jean Loughborough, *Three Girls in a Flat* (Chicago: Press of Knight, Leonard, & Co., 1892), 59.

²⁰² Garfinkle, “Women at Work,” 91.

²⁰³ Maude Howe Elliot, *Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Gouptil & Co., 1893). For more contemporary sources on the Woman’s Building, see Nancy Huston Banks, “Woman’s Marvellous [sic] Achievements,” in *The World’s Fair as Seen in One Hundred Days*, ed. Henry Davenport Northrop (Philadelphia: Ariel, 1893), 632-650, and idem, “Women and the World’s Fair,” *The World’s Columbian Exposition Illustrated* vol. 1, no. 5 (June 1891): 10; “The Columbian Exposition at Chicago—The Woman’s Building,” *Delineator* (July 1893): 88.

²⁰⁴ Elliot, *Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building*, 25.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

The Woman's Building received much attention in the popular press, with supporters and critics often writing about the Building's design in gendered terms. In *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, Hayden's design was described as a "charming Italian villa built by an American woman for the women of all the earth."²⁰⁶ More directly, a critic for *The American Architect and Building News* argued that the roof garden, supported by Yandell's caryatids, was "styled in the apt slang of the hour the 'hen-coop'—for petticoated hens, old and young."²⁰⁷ Created by a woman sculptor and commissioned for a "woman's space," Yandell's caryatids—young maidens themselves—recall another space associated with femininity: the Erechtheion. The Erechtheion was a temple dedicated in part to Athena, the goddess of wisdom, war, and craft, which made the ancient structure particularly apt as the inspiration for a modern temple to women's artistic endeavors. Just as in the antique model, Yandell's caryatids provided structural support for an elevated porch. While some critics denigrated the rooftop garden and the Woman's Building in general as a woman's (i.e., inferior) place, the architecture and its decoration revealed the occupants' desire to assert themselves as simultaneously modern and rooted in tradition, both in terms of agency and art historical convention.

Three Girls in a Flat

While working in Chicago, Yandell shared an apartment near Jackson Park with Laura Hayes and Jean Loughborough (1861-1904), both of whom also contributed to the Woman's Building and other projects at the World's Columbian Exposition. Hayes, a

²⁰⁶ McDougal, "Woman's Work at the World's Fair," 642.

²⁰⁷ "The World's Fair Buildings," *The American Architect and Building News* vol. 38, no. 880 (Nov. 5, 1892): 86.

Chicago native, was Palmer's private secretary for the duration of the Exposition. She also submitted a design for the Woman's Building that won third place in the competition.²⁰⁸ Loughborough travelled to Chicago from Arkansas; she provided the design for the Arkansas State Building and worked as Palmer's record and file clerk.²⁰⁹ Together, the three women co-wrote *Three Girls in a Flat* in 1892, a semi-autobiographical illustrated novel that describes the daily adventures of three young women living unchaperoned lives in a tiny Chicago apartment. Yandell, Hayes, and Loughborough published the book themselves. They bought the paper from a wholesaler, commissioned local artists to provide the artwork, and solicited \$1,200 in advertisements to help fund the project, which they included at the end of the book.²¹⁰

The three characters, Marjorie, Virginia, and the Duke, represent each of the coauthors. Hayes' character, Marjorie, worked in a writing-related profession that recalls Hayes' own job as a personal secretary. Loughborough shared similarities in her name, profession, and Southern upbringing with Virginia Fairfax, or Gene, a busy socialite from Virginia who worked as a file clerk. Yandell, perhaps the coauthor most closely aligned with her fictional character, adopted the pseudonym "the Duke," and was also referred to as Miss Wendell. The name Wendell was a punning allusion to 'Yandell' in its spelling

²⁰⁸ J. B. Parke, "Deftness and Tact—Qualities Which Fit Women for Confidential Positions," *Harrisburg Telegraph*, July 29, 1893, 3. Hayes later married Charles H. Auler in 1906. For an image of Hayes' design for the Woman's Building, which was awarded Third Prize, see *The Inland Architect and News Record* vol. 17, no. 2 (March 1891): n.p.

²⁰⁹ Catharine Cole, "Arkansas State Building," *The Arkansas Gazette*, July 30, 1893, 14; McDougall, "Woman's Work at the World's Fair," 651; Stuart Charles Wade, et. al., *Handbook of the Columbian World's Fair* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, and Company, 1893), 192. Loughborough was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and married Frank Middleton Douglass in Chicago.

²¹⁰ A. S. Duane, "Talented Young Women," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 8, 1893, 13.

and pronunciation, but was also a reference to ‘Wendel,’ a family name from Yandell’s father’s side, and thus, an homage to her Kentucky heritage.

Three Girls in a Flat is a unique resource that is integral to a discussion of the ways that single, professional women both imagined and experienced daily life at the end of the nineteenth century. As Decker has observed, Yandell’s book “provided readers with a contemporary account of young women living in the city and working for the fair. It gave insight into the life of the bachelor maid, even if partially fictionalized.”²¹¹ The text, through the character of Mrs. Brown, reflects cultural concerns about the new “bachelor maid,” and, through the roommates’ conversations and experiences, reveals that sometimes the bachelor maids themselves were concerned about traditional expectations and rules of propriety as well. Shortly after moving into their new flat, Gene raised the “question of the chaperone.”²¹² After much debate and consideration, the women decided that their limited finances and a lack of space would prevent them from hiring a live-in chaperone. They hardly had to worry, though, because their intrusive but endearing upstairs neighbor, Mrs. Brown, was shocked by the roommates’ lack of a proper, live-in chaperone and took it upon herself to check in on them at every possible occasion. In another instance later in the book, the Duke convinces her roommates to visit a Turkish bath on Sunday morning in lieu of attending church. The Duke, a proud and independent young woman, boldly tells her friends that “it is ridiculous for girls who have to work all the week to try and keep up with their duties every single Sunday.”²¹³ In this statement, she acknowledges traditional expectations while also defying them. Marjorie and Gene waver at first, questioning the

²¹¹ Decker, “Enid Yandell,” 206.

²¹² Yandell, Hayes, and Loughborough, *Three Girls in a Flat*, 4.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 67.

“respectability” of three unchaperoned young women visiting a Turkish bath, but eventually give into Duke’s persuasive plea.

Despite occasional anxiety about living alone, their independence was a great source of joy for Gene, Marjorie, and the Duke. The first night spent in their new flat, their “own hearth and fireside,” filled them “with the happiest feeling they had all known for many a day.”²¹⁴ They took pleasure in beautifying and maintaining their own space; several chapters include detailed descriptions of the tabletop settings and festive decorations for the several dinner parties they hosted. The roommates were resourceful—they resorted to using hairbrushes as hammers when hanging garlands of holly at Christmas, since a hammer “was not included in the inventory of [their] household belongings”—and often shared clothes and accessories.²¹⁵ One enamel blue hairclip in the shape of a butterfly came to be so loved that it was considered “the common property of the flat.”²¹⁶

Through their anecdotes, the coauthors provided readers with practical advice about living alone as a young woman in a big city. In one chapter, the flat is burglarized, and the roommates narrowly avoid what could have been a fatal encounter. Gene barely escapes the intruders’ grasp by sneaking through her closet, which opened into Marjorie’s room. As the robbers flee through an open window, Gene screams to alert her roommates and neighbors, and the Duke came out of her room “with a determined look... clutching her pistol with her right hand.”²¹⁷ This story warned readers of the dangers of living in the city as a single woman, but also provided them with practical advice to prevent such occurrences. In book reviews, critics remarked that *The Girls in a Flat* was both

²¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 115.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 119.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 65-66.

entertaining and useful for young American women. The *Knoxville Tribune* commended *Three Girls in a Flat* as “one of the most charmingly written yet practical books of the day,” while a writer for the *New Orleans Picayune* had exceptionally high praise for the book, noting that “these three girls have told splendidly the story of woman’s place in modern America... a better book for women to read has not been published this year.”²¹⁸

Three Girls in a Flat also provides insightful details about Yandell’s character, working methods, and studio in Chicago. One reviewer called *Three Girls in a Flat* “an expression of [Yandell’s] happy artist life at this time, as well as evidence of [her] versatile talent.”²¹⁹ The Duke is described as “bold” multiple times throughout the novel, and in one chapter she describes herself as “proud, imperious, [and] independent.”²²⁰ She “cares not a whit for dress,” and prefers her work clothes over finery.²²¹ Above all, she is determined and ambitious, and her occupation as a sculptor is made a central point of the novel. The Duke’s passion for her work is revealed when she turns down an invitation to the opera in favor of working on a “little sketch for the Woman’s Building,” and later again when she “worked in a frenzy of inspiration” in her studio.²²² *Three Girls in a Flat* shows how the Duke flourished as a young artist and delighted in upsetting conventional expectations of womanhood, but it also includes references to the exhaustion and loneliness that comes along with such a work ethic, side effects of being a sculptor that Yandell would later refer to in her own essays and interviews. In one chapter, the Duke, “exhausted after a hard day’s

²¹⁸ Unidentified clipping, vol. 94, p. 9, Enid Yandell Papers.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Yandell, Hayes, and Loughborough, *Three Girls in a Flat*, 34.

²²¹ Ibid., 74.

²²² Ibid., 33 and 88. This “little sketch” could be a reference to the caryatids she completed for the Woman’s Building, or to her entry for the competition to design the exterior sculptural decoration (see pages 115-116 in this chapter).

work at her studio,” dreams of a handsome man who has come with the intention of marrying her, to take her away from her “struggle to conquer the world alone.” In her dream, the Duke, “like a true woman,” clung to the strength and good that was in him,” but she awakens abruptly when her roommates enter the flat, bringing the dream to an ambiguous end. The Duke quickly realized that she was just dreaming, “the fancy of an over-worked woman’s brain that needed rest and love.”²²³ For the Duke and for Yandell, the life of a young, single woman artist was simultaneously fulfilling, exciting, exhausting, and, at times, lonely.

Three Girls in a Flat was praised for its insight into the inner workings of the World’s Fair, particularly the Woman’s Building and the Board of Lady Managers. The authors were indebted to the Board for bringing them together, first as roommates and ultimately as friends, and they dedicated their “little book” to the Board, whom they praised as the “noble body of women which is acting as advance-guard to the great army of the unrecognized in its onward march toward liberty and equality.”²²⁴ Yandell, Hayes, and Loughborough used their novel as a platform to advertise the work of the Board and the Woman’s Building to the public. Interspersed between stories of the roommates’ adventures in work, society, and homemaking are chapters that are devoted exclusively to Board meetings, to which Hayes had exclusive access, and detailed information about the function, design, and motivation behind the Woman’s Building. A review in the *Albany Times Union*, a New York newspaper, noted that *Three Girls in a Flat* “contain[ed] much needed and valuable information concerning the World’s Fair, and it is given in quite a

²²³ Ibid., 33-36.

²²⁴ Ibid, n.p.

delightful way.”²²⁵ In the *Illustrated Buffalo Express*, a reporter stated that “the authors are enabled through their positions, to give some particularly inside views of Exposition matters, as well as many personal glimpses of the members of the Board of Lady Managers.”²²⁶ A New Orleans newspaper wrote that “in two or three bright chapters, as easily taken as a homeopathic pill, the story of what women have done and will do for the World’s Fair the world over, is charmingly told.”²²⁷

The White Rabbits, Collaboration, and Professional Networking

In 1892, after she completed the caryatids for the Woman’s Building, Yandell worked as an assistant in Lorado Taft’s studio. Taft was responsible for the exterior decoration of the Horticultural Building, and was also in charge of “pointing up,” or mechanically enlarging, the clay and plaster models for many of the monumental sculptures that were designed by other sculptors to decorate the Fair’s many buildings.²²⁸ To complete these tasks, Taft employed several women sculptors as his assistants in addition to Yandell, including Vonnoh, Janet Scudder, Julia Bracken (1871-1942), Carrie Brooks (1871-1944), and his sister, Zulime (known to her friends as Zuhl) Taft (1870-1942).²²⁹ Among the sculptures Yandell and her colleagues helped to complete were the ornamentation on the columns of *Neptune* in the Grand Plaza; Taft’s *Sleep of Flowers* that was located near the

²²⁵ Unidentified clipping, vol. 94, p. 9, Enid Yandell Papers.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Rubinstein, *American Women Artists from Early Indian Times to the Present*, 95.

²²⁹ Sources differ in their account of who worked as Taft’s assistants. Contemporary sources are mostly consistent in naming the six women listed above, while some later historians include Helen Farnsworth Mears, Mary Lawrence (1868-1945), and Ellen Rankin Copp (1853-1901) among the White Rabbits as well. This oversight by historians could be attributed to the fact that Mears, Lawrence, Copp, and other women sculptors, including Evelyn Beatrice Longman (1874-1954), worked as assistants to other male sculptors at the Fair, such as Saint-Gaudens and French.

entrance of the Horticultural Building; the row of Muses in Machinery Hall; the *Victory* statues that crowned the pinnacles of Machinery Hall; and the spandrels between Machinery Hall and the Agricultural Building (Fig. 52).²³⁰ This group of women assistants became known as the White Rabbits, a nickname that developed after newspapers repeatedly printed a conversation that occurred between Taft and the chief architect of the Fair, Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912). When faced with a shortage of sculptors early in the Fair's construction, Burnham ordered Taft to "employ any one [sic] who could do the work—white rabbits, if they would help out."²³¹

For compensation, the White Rabbits earned five dollars a day (\$7.50 on Sundays), the same as their male counterparts who also assisted Taft with the project.²³² In her memoir, Scudder recounted how the women felt after receiving their first paycheck, paid entirely in five-dollar bills:

When the first month's work was finished and we took our place in line with hundreds of workmen to receive our pay envelopes, we were about the happiest white rabbits that ever existed. We rushed back to our rooms at the hotel, opened the envelopes and poured out the five-dollar bills... and carpeted the floor with them. We wanted to see what it felt like to walk on money. It was a wholesome, happy, stimulating life."²³³

In the 1890s, women made up about 18 percent of the labor force. The majority of these women were young and unmarried, working to support themselves and their families. Though women faced much criticism for stepping outside the home to earn a paycheck—many viewed paid labor as a slight against proper womanhood, or feared women would take away good-paying jobs from more deserving men—scholars have found that many

²³⁰ McDougal, "Woman's Work at the World's Fair," 651.

²³¹ Janet Scudder, *Modeling My Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1925), 58.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid., 59.

women enjoyed working outside of the home for a number of reasons.²³⁴ Women worked to support themselves, but they also worked because they enjoyed the sense of accomplishment; the personal freedom and responsibility; and the sociability of sharing their work with other women. In 1892, prominent suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) emphasized the importance of self-sufficiency and individualism for women (deemed a radical vision at the time by even her closest colleagues) in the fight for women's equality in a speech given before the House Judiciary Committee. Stanton argued that the "strongest reason for giving woman all the opportunities for higher education, for the full development of her faculties, ... for giving her the most enlarged freedom of thought and action... is for the solitude and personal responsibility of her own individual life."²³⁵ Scudder's story, and many of Yandell's anecdotes in *Three Girls in a Flat*, reveals that kind of shared happiness that came from not only being an independent, self-supporting artist, but from sharing that experience with friends and colleagues.

The White Rabbits were a novelty both at the Fair and in the press, which published many stories that detailed the women's backgrounds, qualifications, and skills. Isabel

²³⁴ This, of course, becomes more complicated when one considers the aspect of class. While upper class women were encouraged to become skilled in a craft such as embroidery or watercolor, they were often discouraged from seeking out paid work. Much of the scholarship on women in the labor force focuses on factory workers, domestic servants, office work, and other jobs that qualified as "wage labor." Art as an occupation has traditionally been romanticized as something higher than work, as a kind of intellectual and creative labor requiring a unique set of talents. However, most women artists of this period entered into the art profession with the practical motivation of supporting themselves financially. Their writings prove that these artists viewed their work as a form of labor that was in line with other occupations, including domestic work and commercial jobs, a view which differs from the more romanticized version of artistic production furthered by modern art historians. For more on women as wage earners in the nineteenth century, see Blewett, *We Will Rise in Our Might*; Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*; Wertheimer, *We Were There*. On sculpture as a form of women's work, see Vonnoh, "What I am Trying to Do," and "Janet Scudder Tells Why So Few Women Are Sculptors."

²³⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Solitude of Self," *The Woman's Column*, January 1892, 2-3. Reprinted in Ellen Carol DuBois, ed., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, and Speeches* (New York: Schocken, 1981).

McDougal, in an essay on the Woman's Building and the women artists at the Fair, described the sculptors as a "merry colony of art students; clad in white aprons... climbing up and down on colossal gods and goddesses, handling clay and tools with all the dexterity and twice the patient zeal of the men engaged in the same way."²³⁶ Reporters frequently praised the women for their work ethic and skill. They sometimes compared the White Rabbits to their male counterparts and found the women to be more dedicated and deliberate with their work. One reporter proclaimed:

The 'rabbits,' be it said, are in some ways the best workers in the employ of the Columbian exposition. There are many skilled modelers busied throughout the 'White City of Palaces' who are possibly in experience and physical strength superior to them; also possibly in the art of shirking work, which requires a longer apprenticeship than most of these girls have had. But for steady, conscientious work, for artistic enthusiasm and patient zeal, they are unsurpassed.²³⁷

The White Rabbits were discussed in especially descriptive terms, and drawings and photographs of the women at work were often included alongside these articles to better help readers picture the anomaly that was a group of women sculptors. One such photograph from 1892 depicts Taft supervising an assistant as she models one of the figures in *Sleep of Flowers* while the other White Rabbits work on ladders and scaffolds in the background (Fig. 53).²³⁸

Interviews from the time expose the complexities that characterized the relationships between the male and female sculptors at the Fair. While it was evident that Taft depended on his assistants to complete his work, at times his comments betray an attitude towards the women in his studio that made clear the gendered hierarchy of the

²³⁶ McDougal, "Woman's Work at the World's Fair," 651.

²³⁷ Unidentified clipping, vol. 94, pg. 29, Enid Yandell Papers.

²³⁸ The man in the background may be Phillip Martiny. Yandell is third from left.

studio. In one interview, Taft gestured towards his assistants—whom he often referred to as “his girls”—and asked the reporter, “Aren’t they pretty?” He continued, “Some of my guests say I should do wonderfully good work with such assistants. Others don’t see how I can work at all with such distractions.” Of Yandell in particular, Taft remarked: “Miss Yandell has captivated the studio. We are charmed with her.” To be sure, both Taft and the writer were also quick to note the artistic skills of the White Rabbits, in addition to the added “interest,” “charm,” and attention they brought to Taft’s studio. Taft described Brooks as “ha[ving] remarkable ability,” and the writer noted that Yandell was “well and favorably known for her work upon the Woman’s Building.”²³⁹ The commentary in this article and others like it reveal a combination of admiration of the women’s talent and amusement at the novelty of such “delicate,” “young girls” who made Taft’s studio more interesting than any other at the Fair. Indeed, in her memoir Scudder described the attention garnered by the White Rabbits in Taft’s studio, writing that “it must have been a fantastic sight! No wonder all the architects and painters and sculptors—any one [sic] with anything to do with the Fair—came often and shared our paper bag lunch with us! We were the first art sweat shop to come into existence; and to see the white rabbits at work was one of the sights of those days.”²⁴⁰

Like Yandell, many of the young women hired by Taft had travelled to Chicago for the Exposition in hopes of starting their careers as professional sculptors. Some worked for Taft in addition to the commissions they had already been awarded, while others won commissions because of the connections they made and reputation they earned while in his

²³⁹ “Girl Sculptors at Work—A Peep into Lorado Taft’s Studio at the Horticultural Building,” *The Courier Journal*, September 25, 1892, 2.

²⁴⁰ Scudder, *Modeling My Life*, 59-60.

studio. For instance, Brooks sculpted a “charming Cupid fountain” for the Arkansas State Building; Bracken created *Illinois Welcoming the Nation* for the Illinois State Building; and Scudder sculpted a figure of Justice for the Illinois State Building and *The Nymph of Wabash* for the main reception room of the Indiana State Building.²⁴¹ Several of the White Rabbits also collaborated to create a sculptural group of eight-foot tall, “heroic figures of the attributes of woman” for the Illinois State Building.²⁴² Bracken provided the designs for this figural group and sculpted the personification of “Faith,” while Vonnoh, Brooks, and Ellen Rankin Copp sculpted the personifications of “Art,” “Charity,” and “Maternity,” respectively.²⁴³

Working at the Chicago World’s Fair brought together in one studio a group of women sculptors who would continue to weave in and out of one another’s lives for the duration of their careers. The professional relationships and friendships that were fostered as a result of working with the White Rabbits proved to be influential throughout their lives. Shortly after she moved to Chicago in 1891, Yandell wrote a letter to a family friend in which she described her new life: “I have made many charming friends here and some of them very influential ... I am very nicely fixed with some other girls who are also workers.”²⁴⁴ Scudder later recounted similar memories in her memoir, *Modeling My Life* (1925), fondly recalling how the “companionship of working at the same thing always

²⁴¹ McDougal, “Woman’s Work at the World’s Fair,” 651; Rubinstein, *American Women Artists from Early Indian Times to the Present*, 97; “Miss Julia Bracken,” *The Illustrated American* vol. 8, no. 159 (March 4, 1893): 280; Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors*, 149; Thayer Tolles, ed., *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Volume 2, A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born Between 1865 and 1885* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 525.

²⁴² McDougal, “Woman’s Work at the World’s Fair,” 651.

²⁴³ Weimann, *The Fair Women*, 165.

²⁴⁴ Letter to Colonel R. T. Durrett from Enid Yandell, September 24, 1891, Enid Yandell Papers. Reprinted in Decker, “Enid Yandell,” 202.

develops friendship.”²⁴⁵ Recent scholarship, however, attributes the White Rabbits’ eventual successes to the praise and guidance they received from Taft and other male sculptors at the Fair. For instance, curator Desirée B. Caldwell has argued that “[Yandell’s] association with Auguste Rodin and her training with Frederick MacMonnies, Lorado Taft, and Karl Bitter gave her the needed credentials to obtain important commissions of her own” and “profoundly influenced the subsequent evolution of her career.”²⁴⁶ In effect, the novelty of the fact that women were practicing sculpture at all ensured their continued presence in the popular press at the onset of their careers, while the approval by their male colleagues legitimized the work of these women sculptors for later historians.²⁴⁷

Once they returned to the United States, Yandell, the White Rabbits, and other women who began their careers at the World’s Columbia Exposition continued to work and study in the same professional circles and exhibit at the same exhibitions and expositions, both at home and abroad. In doing so, Yandell and her peers built upon a precedent of sisterhood that had been initiated by an earlier generation of American women sculptors who worked abroad in Rome during the 1850s and 60s. Art historian Melissa Dabakis has outlined the varied ways that these women, a group that included Hosmer, Lewis, Vinnie Ream (1847-1914), Emma Stebbins (1815-1882), and Anne Whitney (1821-1915), created a “sisterhood” that involved living and working together; sharing studio spaces; supporting and mentoring one another; and exhibiting together off and on throughout their individual careers. They worked with and under some of the same male

²⁴⁵ Scudder, *Modeling My Life*, 57.

²⁴⁶ Caldwell, *Enid Yandell and the Branstock School*, 1-3.

²⁴⁷ It is crucial to note that not all contemporary observers viewed Taft’s influence as completely positive. Canadian sculptor Frances Loring (1887-1968) complained that Taft benefitted from the labor of his female assistants, using “their talent to create his work.” Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors*, 100.

sculptors, and their work often dealt with the same themes, including similar mythological, historical, and literary subjects, and each sculptor responded to the role of the professional woman in varied ways. They shared the same patrons—including the United States government—and were often mentioned together in the popular press. This colony of sculptors never referred to themselves as a “sisterhood,” or even an official group or organization, but their lives and careers continuously intersected, and each woman benefitted from the friendships and professional relationships they cultivated with one another. Dabakis’ account helps us to understand the lives and careers of Yandell, the White Rabbits, and the other successful women artists that worked at the turn of the twentieth century. Yandell’s experience was quite similar, even having entered into the profession as the academic art world and societal expectations for women had begun to rapidly shift.

After the Fair ended, Yandell, the White Rabbits, and many other women sculptors continued their sculptural work by either studying abroad or returning to work in their home studios, but their lives and careers continued to overlap. Yandell, Brooks, Scudder, and Zuhl Taft went to Paris to study at Madame Vittie’s Académie in Montparnasse under the American sculptor Frederick W. MacMonnies (1863-1937), whose work they had encountered and admired in Chicago (Fig. 54).²⁴⁸ MacMonnies, who was perhaps more

²⁴⁸ Vonnoh also left for Paris for a brief amount of time in 1895, returning to the United States in 1896. See Rubinstein, *American Women Artists from Early Indian Times to the Present*, 99, and idem, *American Women Sculptors*, 111. According to Rubinstein, Vonnoh travelled with Lorado and Zuhl Taft. Although not directly associated with the White Rabbits at the World’s Columbian Exhibition, Mears’ career also continued to overlap with the members of that group after the Fair. She studied in New York under Saint-Gaudens and in Paris at the Académie Julian and Mme. Vittie’s Académie in the late 1890s. Like Yandell and Vonnoh, Mears also had a studio in New York, and she exhibited work at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. See Rubinstein, *American Women Artists from Early Indian Times to the Present*, 94, 101-103.

accustomed to working with women students than his French colleagues, proved to be an excellent mentor to the young women in a way that the French professors were not. According to Scudder, “his sympathy, his interest in each individual pupil, were a revelation to the student who had learned to expect the indifferent glance and cutting remark of the usual instructors.”²⁴⁹ In Paris, Yandell shared classrooms, studio spaces, mentors, and masters with Brooks, Scudder, and Zuhl Taft, and American newspapers provided readers back home with stories of the artists’ successes. In one account, MacMonnies described his students as “some of the most prominent young women in the whole Latin Quarter.”²⁵⁰ The American women became known around the city as “The Angels,” developing a reputation as hard-working, independent artists who were not to be trifled with (Fig. 55).²⁵¹

Yandell and Scudder wrote of their experiences abroad, detailing for readers at home what it was like to be an American art student (and an unchaperoned woman) living in Paris. Yandell wrote a review of recent art exhibitions in Paris for her hometown newspaper, *The Courier-Journal*, that doubled as a day-in-the-life story about American women artists in Paris.²⁵² In her essay, Yandell describes an afternoon spent with her fellow classmates traversing the city to visit three newly-opened exhibitions that, Yandell wrote, “offered what seemed a triple temptation and inducement to leave the day’s studying.”²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Janet Scudder, “The Art Student in Paris,” *Metropolitan Magazine* vol. 5, no. 3 (April 1897): 242.

²⁵⁰ Mildred Madison, “Art Students in Paris—American Girls Who Win Fame,” *The New Haven Register*, May 19, 1895, in Folder 66, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁵¹ Scudder’s memoir includes an entertaining anecdote involving Lily, a French model, and the “Atelier des Anges” that helps to explain how they earned this reputation. See Scudder, *Modeling My Life*, 88-91.

²⁵² Enid Yandell, “Art in Paris,” *The Courier-Journal*, March 27, 1895, C2.

²⁵³ Ibid. “If an art student can not [sic] do at least three [exhibitions] in an afternoon it is considered wasted,” Yandell wrote. The three exhibitions she and her friends visited were hosted

Yandell described the effect the three exhibitions had on her and her peers, writing that after the third exhibition, “our eyes and brains were very weary, and art and doing great work had become very vague to our own intelligences. More than ever we realized that we must work out our own salvation in art... we must have it in ourselves if we succeed. Study and work. These must be the art students’ watchwords.”²⁵⁴ She and her comrades regretted the conspicuous absence of women artists in the first exhibitions they visited, so after stopping for a cup of tea and a snack from an American confectioner, they made their way to “[their] own loved Quartier” to “see what the women were doing” in an exhibition of sketches hosted by the Girls’ Club.²⁵⁵ Yandell had high praise for this exhibition, noting that even though the setting was less pretentious, it showed “sincere work and conscientious study.” Yandell specifically noted the “clever” and “inimitable” work of illustrator and painter Elenore Plaisted Abbott (1875-1935) and Elizabeth Nourse (1859-1938), a widely-acclaimed artist from Ohio who had also attended the Art Academy of Cincinnati. Yandell also acknowledged that the Girls’ Club exhibition had been widely appreciated by the Parisian public as well, reporting that by the end of the first day there were thirty-six pictures sold, confirmation that the “public evidently appreciate[d] budding talent.” She ended the essay with a review of the work of American artists at an exhibition hosted by the International Association of Painters and Sculptors, which she heavily

by the Cercle Volney, the Cercle de la Rue de Boissy d’Anglaise, and the Société des Aquarellistes Française (The Society of French Watercolorists). A 1904 article in *Brush and Pencil* described the first two organizations as the “two leading art clubs of Paris.” “Art News from the Old World,” *Brush and Pencil* vol. 13, no. 6 (March 1904): 430.

²⁵⁴ Yandell, “Art in Paris,” C2.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. The “Girls’ Club” refers to the American Girls’ Club, a boarding house for young American women that included libraries and an independent studio. See Mariea Caudill Dennison, “The American Girls’ Club in Paris: The Propriety and Imprudence of Art Students, 1890-1914,” *Woman’s Art Journal* vol. 26, no. 1 (Spring – Summer, 2005): 32-37.

praised. Though she had prefaced her essay with an opinionated critique of the current state of modern French art and disparaged most of the paintings at the French galleries she visited, Yandell praised the work of her American colleagues and concluded that “we are heartily proud of the American art in Paris.”²⁵⁶

Scudder, in an essay for *Metropolitan Magazine*, described the experiences of American women art students in the studio, as well as how they spent their free time, which involved rooming (or “clubbing”) together and sometimes taking vacations in the French countryside during the summer. “Very often,” Scudder wrote, “two or three girls club together and take a little apartment, furnish it plainly, and divide expenses... Some of the more advanced students rent a studio, where they work, sleep, and eat, and where their instructor calls once or twice a week to criticise [sic] their work.”²⁵⁷ In their free time, they met at one another’s apartments and “talk[ed] shop” and visited the many art galleries and museums around the city.²⁵⁸ When the Académies closed during the hottest months of the summer, Scudder explained that “sometimes a club of six girls rents a little country house for a month and enjoys the pleasures and responsibilities of rural housekeeping.”²⁵⁹ An accompanying photograph with the caption “Girl Art Students in Paris Spending Their Summer Vacation in an Old Farmhouse ” depicts that very type of retreat (Fig. 56). The photograph, a copy of which now resides in the Enid Yandell Photograph Collection at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, Kentucky, depicts Yandell and three other women grouped together peeling vegetables.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ Yandell, “Art in Paris,” C2.

²⁵⁷ Scudder, “The Art Student in Paris,” 241.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 243.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Yandell is seated on the far left, but the three other women have not been identified.

The careers of the White Rabbits, though unique in many ways, followed similar paths. In addition to working on commissions for both public and private sculpture, they continued to exhibit at World's Fairs and international exhibitions, which often provided the opportunity for collaboration.²⁶¹ For example, Yandell, Scudder, and Evelyn Beatrice Longman, a New York-based sculptor who had also worked at the World's Fair in Chicago, worked together as the leaders of Karl Bitter's (1867-1915) working staff at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904.²⁶² Many also took up volunteer and service work in response to World War I. Yandell organized *Appui Aux Artistes*, an aid organization that provided artists in Paris and their families with food and supplies, with Scudder and Malvina Hoffman (1885-1966), Scudder's young student and assistant.²⁶³ Like Yandell, Scudder also worked with the Red Cross during the first world war. After the war ended, many women turned to teaching as an artistic outlet. Just as Yandell took up teaching once her sculpting career was established by founding the Branstock School in Edgartown, Massachusetts, Bracken also turned to teaching later in her career. After moving to Laguna Beach, California, with her painter husband William Wendt (1865-1946), she taught for seven years at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles and became a well-known figure in the art community there.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ In 1901, Yandell exhibited six works at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, and received an Honorable Mention for the *Carrie Brown Memorial Fountain*. Scudder was also represented at this Exposition.

²⁶² In addition to working under Bitter as supervisors for the overall sculptural program, Yandell contributed two statues of *Victory*. Darst, "Art's Bachelor Maid," 57; Lorado Taft, "Sculptors of the World's Fair: A Chapter of Appreciation," *Brush and Pencil* vol. 13, no. 3 (December 1903): 232-233, 235.

²⁶³ One publication described the organization as helping "artists stranded in Paris whose ordinary means of livelihood [had] been interfered with on account of the war." *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* vol. 10, no. 1 (January 1916): 146.

²⁶⁴ Rubinstein, *American Women Artists from Early Indian Times to the Present*, 97.

In 1893, after working for almost two years at the World's Columbian Exposition, Yandell contributed an editorial on the various sculptural projects in process at the World's Fair to *Current Topics*.²⁶⁵ In this essay, Yandell relied on her academic training, recent European travels, extensive knowledge of art history, and her own experiences as an artist to critique the large-scale, free-standing sculptures; the architecture and its ornamental sculpture; and even the landscape design at the Fair. Even though Yandell's name was included only in the byline, Decker has noted that her essay also served to promote herself as a serious, rising professional artist by demonstrating her understanding of the contemporary art scene and showcasing her own art historical knowledge and classical training.²⁶⁶ Yandell might have viewed this essay as an opportunity to further solidify the professional connections she had made while working in Chicago. In it, she repeatedly commends leading male sculptors whom she admired, as well as those she had worked under at the Fair and with whom she would work in the future, including MacMonnies, Saint-Gaudens, Martiny, Bitter, Carl Rohl-Smith (1848-1900), and architect Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895).²⁶⁷ This early essay by Yandell also gives insight into the ideas that informed her own sculptural practice. For instance, she writes: "Sculptors have only two colors, black and white, light and shadow, but by a dexterous handling of the masses

²⁶⁵ Enid Yandell, "Sculpture at the World's Fair," *Current Topics* vol. 4, no. 1 (February 1893): 251-255.

²⁶⁶ Decker, "Enid Yandell," 208.

²⁶⁷ Yandell, "Sculpture at the World's Fair," 252-253. Yandell mentioned Martiny the most; she described four separate projects he completed for the Exposition as "magnificent," "very fine," "genius," and "masterly." Yandell worked under Martiny on the architectural sculpture of the Fine Arts Building, along with Vonnoh and Zuhl Taft. Bitter, an Austrian-born sculptor who worked as the chief sculptor for Richard Morris Hunt, employed Yandell as an assistant in his New York studio after the World's Fair in Chicago had ended. Yandell also worked briefly with Carl Rohl-Smith on his statue of Benjamin Franklin for the Electricity Building. See Darst, *The Sculpture of Enid Yandell*, 2-4; Caldwell, *Enid Yandell and the Branstock School*, 4.

of light and shade, and the plans which constitute them, a series of brilliant effects may be obtained, quite rivaling color painting as a decorative means.”²⁶⁸ This commentary reveals an interest in the textural surface of sculpture and its ability to reflect light—a sculptural trait that Yandell emphasized in her own work that both contemporary critics and later historians have admired.²⁶⁹

In addition to serving as a documentation of the works on view at the Chicago World’s Fair, as Decker has discussed, I argue that this early essay by Yandell also served another important function that speaks to her involvement in furthering women’s work in the art world. While most of Yandell’s exhibition review is devoted to the work of male sculptors and architects, she called attention to several women sculptors as well. Yandell praises specific women’s sculptural contributions, acknowledging the “great skill” of Rideout’s exterior sculptures for the Woman’s Building; Bracken’s “very fine” statue for the Illinois Building; and Copp’s “heroic” and “courageous” figure of Pele for the Hawaii Building.²⁷⁰ Yandell also advocated for women’s participation in sculpture more broadly, offering an optimistic view on the future of women in the fine arts. She argued that “the position women are at present taking in sculpture is one of which we may be proud, and gives great promise for the future.”²⁷¹ Yandell humbly neglected to mention her own work on the Woman’s Building and elsewhere at the Exposition, choosing instead to promote the work of her colleagues, several of whom she worked with as part of the White Rabbits under Martiny and Taft.

²⁶⁸ Yandell, “Sculpture at the World’s Fair,” 253.

²⁶⁹ Historians have attributed this quality of Yandell’s own work to Rodin’s influence, even though Yandell wrote this essay before meeting Rodin and encountering his work in Paris.

²⁷⁰ Yandell, “Sculpture at the World’s Fair,” 254.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

Yandell's Sculptural Work: Women in Public Spaces

Following her success at the World's Columbian Exposition, Yandell created large-scale works in her Paris studio that were intended for public viewing back home in the United States, including fountains, public monuments, and decorative sculpture for World's Fairs such as *Pallas Athena* (see Figs. 35-38). Just as in the tradition of her Chicago caryatids, many of Yandell's sculptural projects spoke to women's roles, both old and new, and ideas of womanhood, relying on allegory and historical references as well as more contemporary subjects and themes. One of her earliest sculptural designs, a competition entry for the pediment of the Woman's Building, set a precedent for much of her later work in its ability to speak to traditional ideas of womanhood and the more modern, New Woman ideal simultaneously. Yandell's pediment design included a central, bas-relief figure of lady Liberty, surrounded by "women of the leading nations of the earth, dressed in their national costumes" who bowed before her.²⁷² On either side of Liberty were two women, one who represented woman in her traditional role of motherhood and the other symbolizing female advancement in art, literature, and the industries."²⁷³ Yandell's design, with its representations of conventional and modern womanhood, would have prepared viewers for the two murals inside the Woman's Building that portrayed the same themes.²⁷⁴ Though never completed—the honor of designing the sculptural decoration for the Woman's Building went to California-native Alice Rideout (b. 1874)—

²⁷² "Women Submit Designs," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 17, 1891, 9.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ For more on these murals, see Corn, *Women Building History*, 113-157; Charlene G. Garfinkle, "Lucia Fairchild Fuller's "Lost" Woman's Building Mural," *American Art* vol. 7, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 2-7; and Sally Webster, *Eve's Daughter/Modern Woman: A Mural by Mary Cassatt* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

Yandell's pediment design utilized the same types of idealized female personifications that appeared in many of her later, most celebrated sculptures.

Yandell's work of this period followed the major trends in American sculpture at the end of the nineteenth century, which was largely a response to the economic prosperity, rapid growth and expansion, and increased nationalism of the Gilded Age. Sculptors and architects were called upon to create a uniquely American art that "presented an idealized vision of the grandeur, pride, destiny, and dreams of American civilization."²⁷⁵ Artists drew upon fifteenth-century Italian sculpture and architecture for inspiration in both subject and style, infusing these older works with a patriotic American sentiment. This so-called American Renaissance found its expression in the City Beautiful movement, in the many World's Fairs held around the country, and in the hundreds of government-sponsored memorial statues and monuments that began to fill the nation's public buildings, parks, and city centers.²⁷⁶ To add to this public demand, the end of the nineteenth century also saw the beginning of the "Country Place Era," when elite, wealthy families built summer homes and residential estates in rural areas as a way to escape the congestion of city life. These estates became sites of lavish, expansive gardens filled with ornamental statuary and fountains by contemporary American artists.²⁷⁷

The American desire for public monuments and private sculpture created a high demand for sculptors and provided women with unprecedented opportunities to enter a

²⁷⁵ Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors*, 97.

²⁷⁶ For more on the American Renaissance, see Brooklyn Museum, *The American Renaissance: 1876-1917* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); Detroit Institute of Arts, *The Quest for Unity: American Art Between World's Fairs, 1876-1893* (Detroit, Michigan: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1983).

²⁷⁷ For more on the Country Place Era, see Robin S. Karson, *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

field of art that was by and large considered “masculine” in nature. Indeed, Yandell saw New York—and the United States more generally—as the place to be for an American sculptor, despite having taken advantage of the educational opportunities abroad. She opined:

[America] is the place for a sculptor. Of course, the art life in Paris is delightful; but one has no chance for individual work there. Why, think of it; there are 15,000 sculptors in Paris—not apprentices, you know, but men of great ability, masters. What chance is there for an American? ... Now, here in New York the able sculptors are counted in the hundreds where, in Paris, they are counted in the thousands; and yet there is infinitely more to be done. America is building every day, and all the critics are working up to the idea of adornment. There isn’t anywhere in the world such a field for sculptors, architects, and decorators. it makes one wildly enthusiastic just to think about it.²⁷⁸

Yandell and her colleagues took advantage of this moment, creating large-scale monuments for public and private patrons and contributing massive sculptural decorations to World’s Fairs and international Expositions. Of these, Yandell’s *Pallas Athena* was perhaps the work that brought the most recognition to any woman sculptor working at the turn of the century.

Design for a Confederate Memorial

As Yandell and her work grew in popularity around the country, she continued to receive commissions from the citizens of her hometown of Louisville. In 1894, Yandell took part in a competition to design a proposed monument intended to honor the city’s Confederate soldiers who died in the Civil War.²⁷⁹ The idea for a Confederate monument

²⁷⁸ “A Kentucky Girl’s Art.”

²⁷⁹ The Commonwealth of Kentucky declared its neutrality at the beginning of the Civil War, but by 1862 it was unofficially adopted by the Union, who set up strongholds there. Kentucky citizens, however, were divided in their sympathies and fought on both sides during the war. In Louisville, Kentucky’s northernmost city, most of the population favored the Union, although

in downtown Louisville was raised as early as 1887, but plans began in earnest when a group of society women (including Yandell's mother) formed the Kentucky Woman's Confederate Monument Association (KWCMA).²⁸⁰ The Association, dedicated to raising funds for a public monument to honor "the memory of the Confederate dead," sponsored a competition for the monument's design which drew over twenty competitors.²⁸¹ Yandell, together with local architect William James Dodd (1862-1930), drafted and submitted two designs to the competition.²⁸² Her reputation in Chicago had followed her back to her home state, where "it was expected she would win the Confederate contest as soon as it was known that she had entered drawings."²⁸³ At a meeting on September 19, 1894, the KWCMA Executive Committee made the unanimous decision to award the commission to Yandell, a decision that was announced in several local newspapers the next day despite having not yet been ratified by the rest of the Association (Fig. 57). What followed over the course of the next two weeks was a controversial and bitter debate within the KWCMA that resulted in Yandell withdrawing her design from consideration.

Newspapers across the region published detailed accounts of the "Women's Confederate Monument War" that lasted from September 19 to October 6.²⁸⁴ The exact

many prominent Louisvillians fought for or assisted the Confederacy, including Yandell's father. Today, historians refer to Kentucky, along with the three other slave-holding states that did not secede (Delaware, Maryland, and Missouri), a "border state."

²⁸⁰ "For a Noble Cause," *The Courier-Journal*, June 9, 1887, 6. See also John E. Kleber, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 216.

²⁸¹ Letter from C. J. Clarke, Kenneth McDonald, and Max Drach to Susan P. Hepburn, President of the Kentucky Woman's Confederate Monument Association, September 28, 1894, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁸² That Yandell submitted two designs is mentioned in "Won by a Woman," *The Tennessee Farmer*, October 6, 1894, vol. 94, Enid Yandell Papers. The design printed in *The Courier-Journal* features a standing allegorical figure instead of a seated figure described by Yandell in later accounts (see pages 122-123 in this chapter), which may indicate that the winning design and another design by Yandell were accidentally mixed up by the newspaper.

²⁸³ Unidentified clipping, *Evening Post*, September 20, 1894, vol. 94, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁸⁴ Unidentified clipping, vol. 94, Enid Yandell Papers.

reason why Yandell's design was ultimately rejected remains unclear because so many explanations were offered as to why Yandell's design was deemed unfit for Louisville's monument. Some members believed that Yandell's sculptural plan went against the design and budgetary guidelines set by the Association, while others argued against the propriety of a young woman sculptor accepting the commission.²⁸⁵ There were also rumors that Yandell's friends and family had canvassed for votes for Yandell's design, even though the submissions were anonymous, which angered some members. Still others found Yandell's design unfit for a memorial to the Confederacy. According to historian Deborah C. Pollack, Yandell's design "aroused ill feelings among Confederate veterans who wished to have a soldier, like many other Lost Cause memorials, instead of an allegorical woman as the primary subject."²⁸⁶ However, it was not only veterans who disproved of the idea of

²⁸⁵ The question of the propriety of choosing a woman to sculpt Louisville's Confederate Monument has a precedent in the earlier controversy that surrounded Vinnie Ream and the *General Robert E. Lee Monument* in Richmond, Virginia. Though Ream was awarded the commission for the monument, she was never able to execute her design because the women's committee associated with the decision refused to accept the competition results. Art historian Kirk Savage has argued that "Ream's gender was not enough to satisfy the women and may in fact have hurt her standing with them. Her lobbying practices had given her a notorious reputation, created largely by female critics in the Northern press." Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 145. Dabakis expands on Ream's reputation as a "lobbyist" and how it colored public opinion of her throughout her career in *Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 188-190 and 196-199. Like Ream, Yandell was also seen by KWCMA members as having lobbied for votes, although it is more likely that Yandell's friends canvassed on her behalf (and evidence to this is also speculative). Stories like these demonstrate that even when a woman managed to circumvent traditional expectations of womanhood and pursue a career in sculpture, she still faced significant barriers to success, sometimes even maintained by members of her own sex who held tightly to conventional ideas of proper femininity. As Dabakis has pointed out, "Regularly criticized by male and female guardians of the separate spheres, public women—no matter what their public personas might have been—seemed to offer an affront to femininity itself." Dabakis, *Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 190.

²⁸⁶ Deborah C. Pollack, *Visual Art and the Urban Evolution of the New South* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2015), 187. Baird has made a similar claim: "Former members of the southern armies complained because a woman instead of a soldier would grace the monument." Baird, "Enid Yandell," 16.

using a female figure to honor Confederate soldiers, preferring instead the type of citizen-soldier monument that had become so popular for both Union and Confederate memorials in recent decades. As one Louisville newspaper reporter observed, “The enthusiasm for the ‘monument with a soldier on it’ seems to have overreached itself, and there appears to be good ground for a restraining order if Miss Yandell and Mr. Dodd should see fit to contest the action of the Association.”²⁸⁷

To appease the Association members, President Susan P. Hepburn proposed that the designs be sent to an anonymous board of architects for review. It turned out that the board of architects also unanimously preferred Yandell’s design over the others, though they recommended changes to Yandell’s chosen materials, citing concerns for durability.²⁸⁸ Still, despite the collective approval of outside experts and the Executive Committee, the ladies of the KWCMA voted 2-1 against Yandell’s design in favor of a design by Michael Muldoon (1837-1911) of Louisville’s Muldoon Monument Company (Figs. 58-59).²⁸⁹

Yandell’s friends and supporters strongly advocated that a re-vote take place so that the commission be granted to her, and the cause was taken up by several newspapers as well. One reporter lamented, “It is regretted that this talented young artist should have lost the opportunity of giving to her people this piece of monumental work, in which she would have embodied much of that patriotic sentiment found in the women of the south, and

²⁸⁷ Unidentified clipping, *Louisville Times*, October 2, 1894, Folder 66, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁸⁸ Letter from C. J. Clarke, Kenneth McDonald, and Max Drach to Susan P. Hepburn, President of the Kentucky Woman’s Confederate Monument Association, September 28, 1894, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁸⁹ Twelve votes were cast for Yandell’s design and twenty-four votes were cast for Muldoon’s. Controversy surrounded this vote as well; accusations of ballot-box stuffing were made when it was found that thirty-six votes were cast at the meeting though only thirty-two members were counted present. These claims were later withdrawn when it was revealed that some members had left the meeting after casting their votes and were not included in the final attendance count. “Monday’s Vote Stands,” *Louisville Post*, Oct. 3, 1894, Folder 68, Enid Yandell Papers.

which would also have been an encouragement to young artists of both sexes.”²⁹⁰ Other writers viewed the Association’s decision as a missed opportunity to support a member of their own sex:

The deplorable phase of the matter is seen in the failure of the women of the association to rejoice in the fact that a Southern woman of genius, after submitting to all the conditions of the proposals, had gained the verdict of the judges. It is hoped the association will reconsider its vote and apologize to Miss Yandell in the only proper way—by accepting her design. When woman earns her way to reward she ought not to be estopped from her dues by women... The women of the association have lost a rare opportunity to exploit the genius of their own sex, and if they can endure the effect of their action, Miss Yandell can well afford to be indifferent.”²⁹¹

Still others saw the debate over Yandell’s design as symbolic of a greater struggle. As reported in the *Louisville Times*, “Kentucky’s experience with... the Ladies’ Confederate Monument Association has set the cause of woman suffrage in this neck of the woods back from the *fin de* to the *commencement de siècle*.”²⁹²

Some members immediately regretted their decision once they were informed of the details of the winning monument and called for a re-vote. Muldoon’s design, featuring a bronze Confederate soldier mounted atop a granite obelisk-like shaft, was said to be a “mere duplicate” of a Confederate monument located in Richmond, Virginia, and at fifty-feet, it lacked the monumentality that characterized Yandell’s taller statue.²⁹³ Even after much public debate and no small amount of scandal—at one point, a local reporter opined

²⁹⁰ Unidentified clipping, vol. 94, p. 15, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁹¹ Unidentified clipping, “Women and a Monument,” vol. 94, p. 38, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁹² Unidentified clipping, vol. 94, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁹³ “The Confederate Monument,” *Evening Post*, October 2, 1894, Enid Yandell Papers. Muldoon made a version of this monument for the State Capital in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1894. The writer of this article must have mistakenly written “Richmond” instead of “Raleigh.” For more on Muldoon’s *Confederate Monument*, see Justus Bier, “A Forgotten Work by Ferdinand von Miller the Younger, A Contribution to the History of Confederate Monuments,” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* vol. 54, no. 187 (April 1956): 125-133.

that “something desperate must be done quickly to keep this community from becoming steered up against a genuine French crisis”—Yandell withdrew her design from the competition and the commission was awarded to Muldoon’s design, which featured mass-produced statues made by a German manufacturer (Fig. 60).²⁹⁴

Although Yandell’s design was never realized, drawings and descriptions printed in several regional newspapers, including an editorial written by Yandell and Dodd, allow for a detailed reconstruction of her proposed seventy-five-foot-tall statue. The design consists of a bronze female personification of Fame mounted on a fifty-foot-tall Corinthian-style column made of red Quincy granite.²⁹⁵ The column is supported by a cylindrical pedestal made of North Carolina gray granite, measuring forty-two feet in diameter. The entire monument is placed on a stepped base made of Bowling Green (Kentucky) white limestone and encircled by five bronze candelabras, each measuring fifteen feet high. The figure of Fame holds a wreath of olives in one hand and a Confederate flag in the other, and was intended by Yandell to be symbolic of “martial fame, as denoted by the sandals, corselet, and breastplate.”²⁹⁶ Yandell pictured the figure in a seated posture to “express deep grief for a ‘Lost Cause’ which the years have sublimated into a glorified sorrow.”²⁹⁷ The wreath of olives, signifying “a gentle emblem of peace,” also represents

²⁹⁴ Unidentified clipping, vol. 94, Enid Yandell Papers. Muldoon’s *Confederate Monument* (now relocated to Brandenburg, Kentucky) incorporated ready-made bronze sculptures by Munich-based artist Ferdinand von Miller (1842-1929). In response to concerns about the monument’s height, Muldoon increased his design to seventy-feet. Von Miller’s mass-produced statues of generic soldiers were made available through an American distributor; they can still be seen in many similar Confederate monuments around the country.

²⁹⁵ “To the Confederate Dead;” *The Courier-Journal*, September 20, 1894, 6; Unidentified clipping, *Chat*, September 29, 1894, Folder 66, Enid Yandell Papers; “Won by a Woman,” *The Tennessee Farmer*, October 6, 1894, vol. 94, p. 60, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁹⁶ “The Fight Still On,” *Louisville Times*, October 4, 1895, Enid Yandell Papers.

²⁹⁷ This description of seated Fame contradicts the sketch printed in *The Courier-Journal*, which features a standing female figure. Enid Yandell and W. J. Dodd, “Confederate Monument,”

the “crown of glory” that “awaits the heroes whose valor and bravery have transformed defeat into victory.”²⁹⁸

When it was published, Yandell’s design was described as “very chaste and original and quite out of the ordinary.”²⁹⁹ Indeed, Yandell’s choice of a female personification of Fame is unique for a memorial to Confederate soldiers.³⁰⁰ Though allegorical figures were popular subjects in nineteenth-century sculpture, by the 1890s, most Civil War monuments were either heroic equestrian portraits of fallen military heroes or the anonymous “citizen-soldier” type monument that could represent any soldier or veteran from either side of the war. For Confederate memorials in particular, citizen-soldier monuments like Muldoon’s provided an ideal visual form to commemorate dead soldiers because they emphasized military bravery as a civic duty without having to address the moral implications of the system of slavery that those soldiers fought to defend.³⁰¹ Instead of reminding viewers that the Confederacy had seceded from the United States to uphold an economic system that

Evening Post, October 4, 1894, Enid Yandell Papers. This statement, intended as an address to the members of the KWCMA prior to their final vote, was also printed in the *Louisville Times*.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ “To the Confederate Dead”; Unidentified clipping, *Chat*, September 29, 1894, Folder 66, Enid Yandell Papers; “Won by a Woman,” *The Tennessee Farmer*, October 6, 1894, vol. 94, p. 60, Enid Yandell Papers.

³⁰⁰ One noteworthy exception is the Alabama Confederate Monument located at Capitol Hill in Montgomery, Alabama. This memorial consists of four citizen-soldier statues representing each branch of the military surrounding a triumphal column decorated with relief sculpture and topped with a bronze female allegorical figure representing Patriotism. It was commissioned by Montgomery’s Ladies Memorial Association and was dedicated in 1898, though not without its own amount of controversy. For more on this monument, see Cynthia Mills and Pamela Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); Ina Marie Porter Ockenden, *The Confederate Monument on Capitol Hill, Montgomery, Ala.* (Montgomery, Alabama: Brown Printing, 1900); and Michael W. Panhorst, “Devotion, Deception, and the Ladies Memorial Association, 1865-1898: The Mystery of the Alabama Confederate Monument,” *Alabama Review* vol. 65, no. 3 (July 2012): 163-204.

³⁰¹ For more on the citizen-soldier monument, see Savage, *Standing Soldiers*, 162-208, and Sarah Denver Beetham, “Sculpting the Citizen Soldier: Reproduction and National Memory, 1865-1917” (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2014).

depended on forced labor, citizen-soldier monuments called to mind the sacrifices and struggles that ordinary men made for their country. By doing so, these statues of anonymous citizen-soldiers do what art historian Kirk Savage has argued statues of military heroes do: they support the “notion of history as a tale of great men” and work to “marginalize cultural constructions of the past that might represent other groups and other categories of historical experience.”³⁰²

So, if public monuments are to be considered permanent placeholders for historic men, which for Civil War memorials took the form of equestrian portraits or statues of the generic citizen-soldier, Yandell’s design can be understood as a subversion of that history, a way to insert women (if at least visually) into that long lineage of “great men” that has formed the narrative of American “history.” This is especially interesting when considering that in 1897, there were very few monuments to women’s achievements, or historical women in general, and when women were remembered in bronze or stone, they were most often in the guise of allegorical figures, angels, or goddesses, or in small-sized portrait busts or figurines meant for private viewing.³⁰³ If public monuments are intrinsically

³⁰² Savage, *Standing Soldiers*, 69.

³⁰³ Another niche that Yandell and her female colleagues helped to fill was that of realistic memorial sculptures dedicated to prominent women leaders and heroines. As Scudder observed, in the nineteenth century, memorials in the United States were overwhelmingly devoted to honoring the achievements of male politicians and military heroes (see page 131 in this chapter). At the end of the century, however, women sculptors were enlisted to create similar monuments to historical women. Rubinstein has noted that if it was not for the work of women sculptors, “it is not likely we would have this layer of works portraying intellectual and active women” from this period. Scudder, *Memoir of my Life*, 153-156; Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors*, 99. For her part, Yandell sculpted portraits of several prominent women leaders and artists, including women’s rights and education activist Emma Willard (1787-1870), French composer Augusta Holmès (1847-1903), and poet and writer Julia Stockton Dinsmore (1833-1926). Her portrait bust of Willard was especially lauded in the popular press (Fig. 61). The Willard marble portrait bust was lost in a fire in 1911. See note in Volume 78, Enid Yandell Papers. The location of the Holmès marble portrait bust is now unknown, but photographs of this sculpture are located in the Enid Yandell Photograph Collection, Box 2, Folder 30. The portrait of Dinsmore, a bronze bas-relief, is located at the historical Dinsmore Homestead in Burlington, Kentucky.

political, then Yandell's design was politically subversive. She consciously chose the opposite of the generic, standing citizen-soldier or proud equestrian military hero: a seated, grieving female representation of Fame with very specific attributes referencing peace and victory that disrupted an American sculptural tradition that upheld the notion of history as dominated by heroic men. If realized, Yandell's *Confederate Monument* would have acted as a gendered intervention into the public landscape that was commissioned and accepted by the (upper-class, white) women of Louisville. That many Louisvillians protested the idea of using a woman to memorialize their Confederate dead speaks to entrenched ideas about what or who could best represent American history.³⁰⁴

Yandell's *Confederate Monument*, with its classical subject and dependence on allegory and symbolism, also represents one side of the nineteenth-century debate about the role of public sculpture and the form it should take. Her design represented the academic, European view that art should stand for a higher purpose and raise its viewers to that purpose. Under this opinion, the public monument was understood as the most visible, most important form of art because of its potential to influence and educate a mass audience. The other side of this debate, represented by the citizen-soldier monument, promoted a more populist approach, one that focused on realism and contemporary subjects that could be easily and quickly understood as opposed to abstract ideas and figures "smothered by the 'tricks' and 'adulteries' of art."³⁰⁵ Those who advocated against the

³⁰⁴ Furthermore, Yandell's design, with its wreath of olives (used by the ancient Greeks to award the victors in the Olympic games) and a palm leaf (symbolic in Christian doctrine of the victory of martyrs) might have reminded viewers of the actual victors (emancipated African-Americans) and losers (the South) in the War, and thus bring to mind the reason the war was fought in the first place and its ultimate result: Reconstruction, which in the late 1890s, so many Southern states were trying to undo.

³⁰⁵ Savage, *Standing Soldiers*, 145. This debate was a quintessentially American one. Savage explains: "Without a set of academic institutions to establish standards of production and channel

mass-produced citizen-soldier type monuments believed that these industrialized monuments cheapened the public memorial, which was “supposed to be the noblest of art forms.”³⁰⁶ In their opinion, as Savage has pointed out, “the rise of the soldier monument was an assault on art itself and everything it was supposed to represent and achieve.”³⁰⁷ Sculptor Karl Bitter, a mentor and colleague of Yandell’s whom she worked with intermittently throughout her career, agreed.³⁰⁸ He viewed the “customary column with its equally customary soldier” as meaningless, average, and damaging to the public’s knowledge of sculpture and of what art should be.³⁰⁹ The debate amongst the members of the Kentucky Women’s Confederate Monument Association was not unique. Communities across the country argued over the best ways to memorialize their fallen soldiers, and most often the result took the form of a citizen-soldier monument.³¹⁰

patronage, as in France, American sculptural practice in the mid-nineteenth century still had two extreme flanks—one intent on professionalizing sculpture by mastering the Western European tradition [like Yandell and her contemporaries], and the other intent on marketing an image of ‘natural’ American genius in tune with popular taste.”³⁰⁵

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Yandell worked under Bitter in New York briefly from 1893 to 1894, executing sculptural decorations for several projects that included decorative sculptures for the Music Gallery in the Astor House, a pediment for the Pennsylvania Railroad Broad Street Station in Philadelphia, and (very possibly) sculptural decoration for the New York and Newport residences of Cornelius Vanderbilt II. She also worked as a leader of his sculptural team at the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis (see page 124 in this chapter). C., “Bachelor Maid in Art,” 506; Darst, *The Sculpture of Enid Yandell*, 4; and Darst, “Art’s Bachelor Maid,” 24.

³⁰⁹ Karl Bitter, “Municipal Sculpture,” *Municipal Affairs* vol. 2 (March 1898): 75-76.

Louisvillians later recognized these characteristics in their own *Confederate Monument* years later. Writing for the *Courier-Journal*, Bessie Laub described Muldoon’s monument as “very simple,” noting that there is “nothing extraordinary or artistic about the style” and that “many monuments far more handsome, of more technical value, have been erected to the soldiers of the South.” Bessie Laub, “The Art of Louisville—Confederate Monument,” *The Courier-Journal*, November 18, 1917, 33.

³¹⁰ According to Savage, most consumers and those in charge of making such decisions preferred the soldier type over more “artistic” designs, noting that in some cases, local communities renounced more obviously “artistic” war memorials when the standing-soldier type became predominant. Savage, *Standing Soldiers*, 183.

In designing a monument to Civil War soldiers, and in her other public works such as the *Carrie Brown Memorial Fountain* (Providence, Rhode Island, 1900) and *Daniel Boone* (Louisville, 1906), Yandell was partaking in a distinctly American sculptural trend that, if not entirely modern by today's standards, was particularly timely in its purpose, even as it relied on Neoclassical imagery and classical sculptural means (Figs. 62-63).³¹¹ Referred to by contemporaries as “monument fever” and by some art historians as “statue mania,” this period saw an extensive amount of monument raising that lasted from the 1870s to the 1920s.³¹² Americans’ monument fever resulted in thousands of memorials dedicated to all kinds of causes and people, from war heroes and pioneers to literary figures and philanthropists, made by the country’s most prominent artists as well as small manufacturing companies.³¹³ Yandell’s oeuvre, however, was much more versatile than public monuments. In her lifetime, she was just as well-known for her garden statuary and smaller, “parlor” sculptures made for private viewing which became popular amongst elite patrons, especially women.

Yandell’s Sculptural Work: Art for Women’s Spaces

Though high-profile works like *Pallas Athena*, the *Carrie Brown Memorial Fountain*, and *Daniel Boone* created a sensation among American audiences and helped to further promote Yandell’s work, she found it difficult to secure constant commissions in

³¹¹ The *Carrie Brown Memorial Fountain* is another example of Yandell using public sculpture to introduce the female body into public space. This fountain also showcases how Yandell’s style developed from monuments inspired by Neoclassicism to a more realist approach to texture and light effects.

³¹² Erika Doss, *Monument Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 22.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 20-30.

large-scale monuments. This was a common predicament for sculptors who found success in the arena of exposition sculpture, which, although it provided a platform for wide exposure, did not inevitably lead to consistent commissions for monumental works.³¹⁴ For women, it was even more difficult. Not only were women sculptors less likely than their male colleagues to be offered monumental public commissions, but, as art historian Linda Kim has noted, women also had to contend with an “informal boys network” of sculptors and architects that effectively barred them from participating in the most prominent and lucrative modes of sculpture, as well as other forms of implicit discrimination.³¹⁵ This necessitated that Yandell and many of her peers find other outlets to make an income since, as unmarried women, they alone supported themselves financially. As a result, women sculptors at the turn of the century carved their own niche in the American sculpture market. Yandell, Scudder, Vonnoh, and others perfected a unique type of sculpture that was in response to both the tastes and desires of the American elite and to their own personal preferences. These works included portrait figurines, the miniature, full-figured sculptures that became popular among the upper classes who wished to show off their wealth and status in their home, and other small-scale decorative sculptures for interior decoration, as well as ornamental statuary and fountains for private gardens. According to Kim, the small-scale domestic sculpture market served as “an important outlet for the talents and productivity of the growing number of female sculptors in the early decades of the twentieth century who were effectively, if not officially,

³¹⁴ Michele H. Bogart, “American Garden Sculpture: A New Perspective,” in *Fauns and Fountains: American Garden Statuary, 1890-1930* (New York: The Parrish Art Museum, 1985), n.p.

³¹⁵ Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors*, 99; Linda Kim, “Separate Spheres: Potterines, Gender, and Domestic Sculpture in Turn-of-the-Century America,” *American Art* vol. 28, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 10-11.

excluded from the more remunerative and prestigious field of monument and public sculpture commissions.”³¹⁶ Works like Yandell’s *Lotus Flower Fountain* (1902), *Four Seasons Sundial* (1902), and *Faun Emptying Shell* (also known as *Satyr with Shell*, 1912) took on the kinds of allegorical, mythological, and genre subject matter that appealed to architects, landscape designers, and aristocratic home owners who, in designing their country estates, wanted to “articulate the myth of a return to pastoral nature and inspire a sense of regeneration by expressing a feeling of spiritual continuity to link past and present” (Figs. 64-66).³¹⁷

Although Yandell’s style has been written about in terms of its dependence on the work of her male teachers and mentors (including MacMonnies, Rodin, Saint-Gaudens, and Taft), many of her public monuments and small-scale sculptures have just as much in common with the work of her female peers. Their work was similar in style, function, and art historical references, and it appears that Yandell drew inspiration from the work of women sculptors much in the same way she looked to classical sources and the leading male sculptors of the day. For instance, Yandell’s *Pan* (1903-1905) and Scudder’s *Frog Fountain* (designed 1901, cast in 1906) are strikingly similar in their subject, conception, and style, though they differ in size and function (Figs. 67-68). *Pan* measures 66 inches in height and sits atop Yandell’s *Hogan’s Fountain*, originally intended for thirsty horses and dogs in Cherokee Park, Louisville’s largest public park (Fig. 69). Scudder’s *Frog Fountain*, on the other hand, is a little over half the size of *Pan* at 37 ½ inches tall and was cast multiple times for various private gardens. However, both works feature dancing, nude young boy figures who smile as they look down at the amphibians near their feet. They

³¹⁶ Kim, “Separate Spheres,” 5.

³¹⁷ Bogart, “American Garden Sculpture,” n.p.

both stand on their toes with one foot lifted and their arms extended outwards, and both exhibit a similar style in the modeling of the young boy's body, with slender limbs and a pudgy, protruding belly.³¹⁸

Despite their close relationships; their shared educational and professional experiences; and the undeniable similarities found in their work, previous scholarship, with its focus on their male influences, has neglected to fully acknowledge the artistic impact this community of women had on one another. Yandell, Scudder, and others were of course aware of the few garden sculptures that their teacher MacMonnies made, but they were also paying close attention to their peers' domestic statuary and portrait figurines that were selling in mass quantities. This generation of women sculptors came into their careers together, worked abroad together in the same studios and classrooms, and—as clippings in Yandell's personal scrapbooks attest—followed each other's careers closely. This is something that has been unacknowledged by previous scholars, an omission that has worked to further aggrandize male artists and has resulted in women artists being erased or minimalized in the canon.

Yandell and her community of women sculptors worked in the same formats, mastering the portrait figurine and garden statuary trends, and were even credited with bringing about these popular fads in the United States.³¹⁹ In the process, they created a new market for women that occupied women's spaces and gave women a new way to represent themselves. By eschewing heroic public monuments in favor of smaller works designed

³¹⁸ Art historian Julie Aronson makes a similar comparison between Vonnoh's miniature "potterines" and Yandell's *Gibson Girl*. Aronson, *Bessie Potter Vonnoh*, 53-54.

³¹⁹ Contemporaries recognized Yandell and her peers as revitalizing and even "inventing" these trends, and later historians have followed suit. For instance, Rubinstein has argued that Scudder "innovated a new genre of garden sculpture that became very popular in America." Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors*, 96. See also page 132 in this chapter.

for private consumption, women like Yandell were able to, as Bogart has argued, exert a “female privilege—a freedom to create unpretentious images” of their own that were designed to bring joy and amusement to themselves and their patrons.³²⁰ In terms of personal agency, the decision to specialize in “domestic” sculpture could be artistically liberating. In her memoir, Scudder described the moment she decided to concentrate exclusively on decorative fountains and garden sculpture. While speaking with a potential patron who had requested a portrait statue of American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Scudder explained that she would not “add to this obsession of male egotism that is ruining every city in the United States with rows of hideous statues of men—men—men—each one uglier than the other—standing, sitting, riding horseback—every one of them pompously convinced that he is decorating the landscape!”³²¹ Instead, Scudder committed herself to creating amusing work that “was going to decorate spots, make people feel cheerful and gay—nothing more!”³²² Once she made this decision, Scudder wrote that she felt a “moment of confidence,” that her “difficulties were over with and that, in finding [her]self, in realizing what [she] wanted to do, Fortune was going to beam on [her] from then on.”³²³

Some sculptors chose one format to specialize in—Vonnoh, for instance, became especially well-known for her figurines—while others, including Yandell, worked in multiple areas, simultaneously mastering garden statuary, portrait figurines, and other small, decorative sculptures. Though Yandell had been creating portrait busts and standing figures since her graduation from the Art Academy of Cincinnati, after about 1907 she gave

³²⁰ Bogart, “American Garden Sculpture,” n.p.

³²¹ Scudder, *Modeling My Life*, 155.

³²² Ibid., 165.

³²³ Ibid., 173.

up public monuments to work almost entirely on a smaller scale. In addition to portrait figurines and busts, her sculptural output from this period included sundials and fountains for gardens, as well as small “parlor” sculptures intended for interior display in the home, such as doorstops, lamps, vases, bookends, and tankards.³²⁴ Oftentimes these works took the form of female literary characters and personifications, subjects that catered towards a female viewership and spoke to the desires and tastes of the New Woman (albeit a very specific elite, white New Woman).

Yandell especially succeeded at portrait figurines; some newspapers even credited Yandell with inventing the “figureen” medium.³²⁵ The tiny scale of these statuettes was perfectly suited to contemporary fashions and dress, which, in Yandell’s opinion, appeared out of place in more traditional, life-sized or bust portraiture.³²⁶ She exhibited her earliest figurines in Paris before moving back to the United States and setting up her studio in New York.³²⁷ There, Yandell was sought after by an aristocratic clientele, particularly women, who desired tiny likenesses of themselves and their family members.³²⁸ Although only about twenty of Yandell’s figurines are known today, contemporary accounts suggest that

³²⁴ The exception to this is *Chief Ninigret*, also known as *Indian and Fishes*, a six-foot tall, bronze fountain commissioned by the city of Watch Hill, Rhode Island, cast and dedicated in 1914. Yandell exhibited a smaller version of this statue at the Armory Show in 1913. See Darst, “Art’s Bachelor Maid,” 72-74.

³²⁵ “A Talented Sculptor,” *The Times-Picayune*, September 26, 1897, 24.

³²⁶ Enid Yandell, “Talent for Sculpture,” in *What Women Can Earn: Occupations of Women and Their Compensation*, edited by Grace Hoadley Dodge, et. al. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1899), 227. Yandell opined that “the lines of the modern figure and the conventionalities of modern dress are often charming in a statuette, when they would be far from agreeable in a statue.” Critics echoed this sentiment as well. See, for instance, “The Art of the Age,” 188.

³²⁷ In Paris, Yandell exhibited two statuettes at the 1896 Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts: a portrait of Miss Edna McPherson and a portrait of her sister, Elsie Yandell (*The Gibson Girl*, see pages 133-134 in this chapter).

³²⁸ One reporter referred to the portrait figurine trend as “the rich woman’s latest craze.” “St. Louis Women Becoming Interested in the Figurine Fad,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 19, 1903, 8.

she produced many more. It was reported that Yandell was so busy with figurine commissions that she could not keep up with the orders.³²⁹ Yandell's figurines, and the figurine fad in general, were well-received by critics, who viewed them as quintessentially modern in both their subject and their style.³³⁰ One writer referred to the statuettes as "figures of modern women in modern attire and surroundings."³³¹ Another reporter celebrated Yandell's portrait of a young man wearing a golfing outfit as "a crystallized essence of America."³³² Yandell's rough, almost unfinished handling of the clay left traces of the artist's hand in the finished bronze figures, prompting one observer to note that "the small statuettes have great charm, showing the whole figure and, coming directly from the hands of the sculptor, have all the value of an original sketch."³³³

One typical example of Yandell's figurines is a portrait of her sister, Elsie Yandell Barber, also known as *The Gibson Girl* (Figs. 70-72). The figurine depicts Elsie with her legs crossed and body seated at an angle in a simple wooden chair. She supports her head with her right hand, which is propped on the back of her chair; her gaze is facing down towards the open book in her lap, held in place by her left hand. Elsie is fashionably dressed in a long gown with a fitted waist and puffed sleeves, and her hair is tied in a loose chignon much like that worn by the fictional "Gibson Girl" made famous by illustrate Charles Dana

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Kim has similarly documented how Vonnoh's figurines were also understood as "revolutionary" and extremely modern. Kim, "Separate Spheres," 3.

³³¹ "Famous Kentucky Girl in Paris," *Chicago Tribune*, August 9, 1896, 25.

³³² "A Kentucky Girl's Art." This reference to a statuette of a "sturdy, good-looking young American with his hands in the pockets of his golf trousers" most likely refers to her portrait of Donn Barber, her brother-in-law (c. 1898, now lost). This statuette can be seen in a photograph featuring a number of Yandell's small-scale domestic sculptures. See Box 2, Folder 40, Enid Yandell Photographs. For more on this figurine, see "St. Louis Women Becoming Interested in the Figurine Fad."

³³³ "An American Sculptress' Work."

Gibson (1867-1944) that gives this figurine its nickname. Around the base of the figure on the left and back sides, Yandell included objects that articulated more about Elsie's character and interests, including musical instruments, open books, and a stylus and scroll. Portrait figurines like *The Gibson Girl* functioned in much the same way as painted portraits and staged photographs did during this time: they allowed middle- and upper-class Americans a way to portray themselves (their likeness, their talents, their interests, and their status) to their peers.

Yandell saved clippings featuring the Gibson Girl in her personal scrapbook that might have served as inspiration and/or references for her portrait of her sister. One example is *He is Waiting for Me*, which was printed in *The Century Magazine* just a few years before Yandell sculpted her own version of the Gibson Girl (Fig. 73). However, like in her earlier work (such as the Woman's Building caryatids), her portrait figurines were a culmination of many influences, both ancient and modern. According to one 1899 article published in *Pearson's Magazine*, a monthly magazine dedicated to literature, politics, and the arts, Yandell "first conceived the idea of reproducing these small portraits in marble from the similar figures found at Tanagra."³³⁴ Yandell might have come across these terracotta "Tanagra figures," as they were commonly referred to in the nineteenth century, at any number of international exhibitions, World's Fairs, or museums, where they were a popular attraction (Fig. 74). Yandell was also likely influenced by the contemporary French paintings and sculpture that she was exposed to while studying and working in Paris. In 1895, the same year she sculpted the portrait of her sister, Yandell attended an exhibit of paintings that included Jean-Leon Gerôme's *The Antique Pottery Painter*, which features

³³⁴ "The Art of the Age," 188.

a seated woman in classical garb painting a figurine while two other women market a selection of figurines to passerby at a nearby window (Fig. 75).³³⁵ Again, with her *Gibson Girl* and her many other portrait figurines, Yandell expertly combined classical art historical tradition with modernist sensibilities and style while simultaneously participating in a commercial (and very modern) market that was predicated on self-expression and disposable income.

Taken together, works like *Pallas Athena*, the *Confederate Monument* design, *The Gibson Girl*, and *The Carrie Brown Memorial Fountain* typify the variety that characterized Yandell's sculptural output, explaining why critics and later historians have constructed such disparate readings of Yandell's work and career. Historians, curators, and Yandell's contemporaries have described her art as simultaneously "passé," "modern," "highly classical," and "new." Yandell relied upon classical models, just like the most famous sculptors of her day, while simultaneously moving towards a more realistic style with textured surfaces that spoke to the modernity of the times. Works like the *Kiss Tankard* (1899) and *Bluebeard's Wife* (1911) prominently display the nude female body in a way that anticipates the later work of Harriet Frishmuth (1880-1980), whose bronze dancers, goddesses, and nymphs have been described as embodying "carefree abandon and an eroticism that was unprecedented in the mainstream art of the time" (Figs. 76-80).³³⁶ Furthermore, these factors—the breadth of her work, the seemingly-disparate styles, and her use of "sentimental" subjects like mythical creatures—have also resulted in Yandell's absence in recent art historical scholarship. However, Yandell was not alone in her experimentations with multiple styles and sculptural formats. Others like Scudder and

³³⁵ Yandell, "Art in Paris."

³³⁶ Bogart, "American Garden Sculpture," n.p.

Vonnoh claimed this field as their own as well, not to mention Rodin, who produced many miniature versions of his sculptures that are prized by museums today as feats of modern art. It was because of their success in these arenas that women like Yandell were able to make a living for themselves as unmarried women.

A “Darling of the Popular Press”: Negotiating a Public Identity and Promoting Women Sculptors in the Press³³⁷

As she gained recognition and acclaim, Yandell cultivated a popular persona as an independent, unmarried Southern artist. As an accomplished, professional artist, Yandell used her platform to promote the work of her peers and to encourage other aspiring women artists in the field of sculpture.³³⁸ Like Alice Barber Stephens, Yandell was frequently featured in the popular press as both the writer and the subject of many articles on contemporary sculpture and women’s role in the arts. In addition to her role as co-author of *Three Girls in a Flat* and the exhibition review she contributed to *The Courier-Journal*, Yandell published two other essays on sculpture intended for a general audience. Decker has argued that together, Yandell’s written work “assured broad exposure for Yandell’s work” and reveals her “robust beginnings as a professional.”³³⁹ Her essays and coverage in the press, Decker says, “offered the opportunity for women (and other publics) to

³³⁷ Darst, “Art’s Bachelor Maid,” 5.

³³⁸ In addition to encouraging women through her writing, Yandell’s also used her influence to start her own art school. In 1908, Yandell founded the Branstock School on Martha’s Vineyard in the town of Edgartown, Massachusetts. The Branstock School originally functioned as a summer school for sculpture, but later added courses in painting, drawing, woodblock printing, and various decorative arts, including metal work and china decoration. Yandell employed several of her colleagues to assist in teaching the various courses, including London-born painter and illustrator Albert Sterner (1863-1946) and portrait painter John Christen Johansen (1876-1964). In addition to the three-month long classes, the Branstock School also offered small art exhibitions that were open to the community.

³³⁹ Decker, “Enid Yandell,” 208.

identify with one another, showcase their work, and communicate with a mass public.”³⁴⁰

I argue that in addition to promoting herself and her work, Yandell used her writing and her interviews with multiple media outlets in order to help advance the work of other women sculptors and to encourage and advise aspiring women in the field. Reporters asked Yandell’s opinion of women’s status in the fine arts, wrote accounts of her personal experiences and successes, and asked for advice that she might offer to other women who might desire a career in sculpture. Yandell was optimistic about women’s future in the arts and was proud of the successes that she and her peers had already achieved, often making it a point to praise the work of her colleagues. Like Stephens, Yandell also offered practical advice that might have even heeded as a warning to young women.

In 1899, philanthropist and social welfare worker Grace Hoadley Dodge (1856-1914) edited and published *What Women Can Earn: Occupations of Women and Their Compensation*, a compilation of essays by mostly professional women that serves as a “practical and comprehensive” guide outlining the current state of women in the workforce.³⁴¹ Intended for a broad audience that included wage-earning women, women who wished to have careers, and the general, curious public, *What Women Can Earn* included both practical information, such as expected compensation for various occupations, as well as advice based on personal experience from veteran women professionals. The occupations included in the text range from “traditional” feminine jobs such as lace-making, laundry, and cooking to the so-called “Learned Professions,” “Trade

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Grace Hoadley Dodge, ed., *What Women Can Earn: Occupations of Women and Their Compensation* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1898): iii.

and Business Occupations,” and the “Industrial Arts.” Yandell was asked to contribute an essay on women sculptors, which she titled, “Talent for Sculpture.”

In this essay, Yandell advised readers in much the same way as she would in later newspaper interviews and magazine articles, by emphasizing the amount of work and labor that the occupation of sculpting required. Like in her previous writing, Yandell maintained an optimistic, if not entirely realistic, attitude about women’s role in the arts.³⁴² She wrote that “there is only one reason why women with a talent for sculpture should not reach the same pre-eminence in this art as in others, and that is they do not all have the muscular strength and physical endurance which sculpture in its largest form calls for.”³⁴³ “As for the success of feminine sculptors,” Yandell continued, “many women have all the requisite qualifications. There are too many well-known examples to leave the matter any longer in doubt.”³⁴⁴ For Yandell, who had just been honored with membership into the National Sculpture Society in 1898, becoming one of the first women members of that organization and thereby securing her status as a leading American sculptor, her belief seems to have been that if a woman in turn-of-the-century America wanted to be a sculptor and had the talent to do so, then she would succeed at it. Of course, Yandell herself had benefitted from an early education in the arts, an encouraging and supportive family, and well-connected patrons and family friends who willingly helped to secure commissions her at an early stage in her career—three other factors that were crucial to any artist’s success and were not easily available to most women in the late-nineteenth century.

³⁴² See page 114-116 in this chapter on Yandell’s review of sculpture at the World’s Fair in Chicago.

³⁴³ Yandell, “Talent for Sculpture,” 226.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

While “Talent in Sculpture” might today be read as evidence of Yandell’s unique privileges, for contemporary readers it provided valuable, practical information regarding the mechanical process of statue-making. Yandell described each of the steps in the sculpting process, from turning the original design into a “suitable skeleton” for the clay models to the casting process, and explained how an artist is paid for commissions.³⁴⁵ Like Stephens, Yandell opined about the proper education and training for a sculptor, which she believed must be rooted in a firm understanding of drawing from the nude model (“The nude, always the nude!” she admonished).³⁴⁶ Unlike the generation of women sculptors before her, Yandell “strongly urge[d] American girls to make their first three years’ study in their own country,” echoing advice put forth by other contemporary writers and artists.³⁴⁷ In the late 1890s, women had access to more educational opportunities in the United States than their predecessors, and, as Swinth has noted, women students were also treated more equally in American art academies.³⁴⁸ The art school system in Paris was largely segregated by sex until 1897 when the École des Beaux-Arts began to enroll women students. Because of their limited options, women artists enrolled in smaller, independent ateliers, such as the Académie Julian, Académie Colarossi, and Madame Vittie’s Académie, where they were charged more for tuition for courses that were both lower in standard and offered less often

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 226-227.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 227.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. In an 1893 issue of *The Illustrated American*, one writer recounted a conversation between two successful women artists and their advice to younger women to “master the ground work of art in the best New York schools” before leaving to study in Paris. Scudder issued the same advice in her 1897 article: “I think it a mistake for any girl, however ambitious, to go abroad without a foundation... When a pupil feels that she has got all possible in this country, then it is time to think of entering the studios of Paris.” Mary L. Bisland, ed., “Current Topics of Interest to Women—A Moment of Consideration,” *The Illustrated American* vol. 8, no. 151 (January 7, 1893): 30; Scudder, “The Art Student in Paris,” 239.

³⁴⁸ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 49-51.

than those at the École.³⁴⁹ Thus, while it was still necessary for American artists to study abroad in order to obtain experience, make professional connections, and gain name recognition back in the United States, it was easier for women in particular to start their art educations at home and then build upon that training by working under a master sculptor in Paris, because, as Yandell advised from her own experience abroad, “no account is taken in the ateliers of any except advanced students.”³⁵⁰

Yandell was a fiercely independent and ambitious woman who negotiated strategies of sisterhood at various times throughout her career. While she did not limit herself to separatist sisterhood strategies, these strategies did provide an early foundation for her future success. She was well-known and well-respected as an artist in her own time, but her story—and the stories of other women artists like her—have been written out of the art historical canon for many reasons. Yandell is an example of someone who learned from the most renowned sculptors working at the turn of the century, and who followed the trends of her time, even if those trends, such as portrait figurines and garden statuary featuring mythical creatures and giggling children, seem cliché and out of touch with our cultural values today. What we can see in Yandell’s work and her career is an example of how American women sculptors worked both within and outside of professional circles of women to create individual, successful careers. Like the so-called “white, marmorean flock” before them, Yandell and her female colleagues provided other women sculptors like Frishmuth, Hoffman, Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973), Alice Morgan Wright

³⁴⁹ These three schools were described by Scudder as “the most important,” with classes open to both men and women and evening classes that were also “open to both sexes.” Scudder, “The Art Student in Paris,” 242. The Académie Julian began accepting women students in 1880. Stephens and Frances Benjamin Johnston both studied there, and Stephens also took classes at the Académie Colarossi. See Chapters One and Three in this dissertation.

³⁵⁰ Yandell, “Talent for Sculpture,” 227.

(1881-1975) and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875-1942) with the confidence and path they needed to achieve their own professional success.³⁵¹ As a professional artist, Yandell balked at traditional cultural expectations of womanhood, and yet her work represented the values of elite culture and the upwardly aspiring middle-class—and she was not alone.

Photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston is another example of a woman artist who balked at tradition in her personal and professional life while using strategies of sisterhood to achieve professional success and to help promote other women in the arts. In July of 1897, when Yandell was still residing in Paris after the success of her *Pallas Athena*, she received a letter of introduction from Jules Boeufvé, the French Ambassador to the United States, on behalf of Johnston, who was visiting Paris that summer for “study and recreation.”³⁵² Boeufvé wrote, “Your long stay at the capital and the prominent position you have won for yourself among American artists will, no doubt, enable you to give Miss Johnston much valuable advice and useful information.”³⁵³ Though it is unknown whether Yandell and Johnston met while they were both in Paris, Boeufvé’s letter is evidence that American women’s artistic circles of this period were more fluid than scholars have

³⁵¹ In an essay on Hoffman, Linda Nochlin refers to “several noteworthy American women sculptors [who] were already making names for themselves in the field” about ten years prior to Hoffman’s entrance into the professional art world. She includes Vonnoh, Longman, Scudder, Huntington, and Whitney among this group, arguing that “all these successful and prominent women in the field of sculpture, about half a generation ahead of Malvina Hoffman, may well have served to heighten the latter’s sense of confidence and ambition.” Linda Nochlin, “Malvina Hoffman: A Life in Sculpture,” *Arts Magazine* vol. 59, no. 3 (November 1984): 107.

³⁵² Letter to Enid Yandell from Jules Boeufvé, French Embassy in the United States, July 6, 1897, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as “Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers”).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

previously recognized, especially in terms of breaking down boundaries between media, the artists' personal backgrounds, and geography.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁴ Johnston's 1897 diary includes entries from July 9-21 that detail her voyage from Philadelphia to Liverpool with her mother, Frances Antoinette Benjamin Johnston (these entries may in fact have been written by her mother). Johnston also kept a separate "Ship's Diary" that includes entries dating from July 10-17, which appear to be in her own hand. There is no mention of Yandell in either diary. See Diary Two and Diary Three ("Ship's Diary"), reel 1, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Unfortunately, Yandell's correspondence from this period is lost. See page 19, note 38, in this dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE

Frances Benjamin Johnston and Her “Sisters of the Camera”³⁵⁵

In 1900, a Washington, D.C., reporter noted that “Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston of this city, one of the most widely known of women photographers, has succeeded in securing a collection of pictures of incomparable beauty from her feminine colleagues, which she is taking to Paris to be exhibited at the International photographic congress in the French capital as a feature of the great exposition now in progress.”³⁵⁶ In her capacity as the United States delegate to the International Congress on Photography at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, Johnston seized the opportunity to promote the work of American women photographers by lecturing on the subject and organizing an exhibition that showcased the work of 28 women photographers to an international audience, the first show of its kind. As one of the nation’s most prominent and prolific photographers, Johnston had enormous influence in terms of fostering women’s involvement in the field of photography both in America and abroad (Fig. 81).

Johnston is primarily known today for her portraits of politicians and elite members of Washington, D.C., society; her documentary-style photographs of students at the Hampton Agricultural and Industrial School; and her architectural photography that

³⁵⁵ Clarence Bloomfield Moore, “Women Experts in Photography,” *The Cosmopolitan* vol. 14, no. 5 (March 1893): 582.

³⁵⁶ “Progress in Photography,” *The Evening Star*, July 6, 1900, 7.

dominated the second half of her career. However, Johnston also worked tirelessly to promote the work of her “feminine colleagues” and encourage other American women to take up photography as a vocation. In addition to organizing the very first exhibition to showcase American women photographers abroad, Johnston served as a mentor to women across the country through her public lectures and letter-writing correspondence. Johnston, a self-proclaimed and unapologetic New Woman, also made use of the mass media to promote her cause. Not only was she often featured in popular magazines such as *The Ladies’ Home Journal* as an example of professional success, but she also published editorials and essays that endorsed the work of her colleagues and gave practical advice to other aspiring artists. As a result, Johnston became a role model for a generation of women who nurtured their professional desires in a culture that had previously limited them to domestic roles. This chapter examines Johnston’s career, public work, and professional relationships to further emphasize how women artists relied upon and benefitted from all-women’s exhibitions, the mass media, and personal and professional connections as a means of advancing their own careers, promote the careers of their female peers, and encourage other women to explore photography as a profession.

Johnston has been the subject of several monographs and exhibitions, as well as numerous scholarly articles published since the 1970s when art historians and other scholars, influenced by the second-wave feminist movement, began researching and “recovering” the work of previously unknown or unacknowledged women artists. Because of the vast extent and range of her artistic output and the popularity of her chosen medium, Johnston has received more scholarly attention in recent decades than her contemporaries

who worked in illustration and sculpture, including Stephens and Yandell. However, the discussion of Johnston, like all artists, has followed a path determined by trends in scholarly production, which in turn follow historiographic trends. For Johnston, art historians were first concerned with biography, then her portrait work, then her photographs of African-Americans and Native Americans. The way that Johnston's work has been received and then analyzed by scholars has been shaped by cultural forces outside the field of art history, which has thus stunted a full understanding of art production and its interpretation.

Early scholarship on Johnston was mostly devoted to uncovering her biography and reevaluating her work and its importance during her lifetime.³⁵⁷ Then, several art historians turned to examine Johnston's extensive work as a portrait photographer, a pursuit she undertook after opening a home studio in 1895. For instance, Constance Glenn, co-curator with Leland Rice of the 1979 exhibition *Frances Benjamin Johnston: Women of Class and Station* at California State University, has argued that the variety of both sitters and styles of portraiture found in Johnston's photographs of upper-class Washingtonian women testify to the quality of her art in that each of the sitters, many of whom "lived their lives in the shadow of their husbands' names and fame" were given "an identity of their own in a Johnston sitting."³⁵⁸

This examination of Johnston's portraits ultimately led to an interest in how Johnston's work was related to ideas of identity, representation, and racial and/or sexual difference. In this regard, some scholars have taken an interest in Johnston's series of

³⁵⁷ See, for instance, Pete Daniel and Raymond Smock, *A Talent for Detail: The Photographs of Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1889-1910* (New York: Harmony Books, 1974).

³⁵⁸ Constance W. Glenn and Leland Rice, *Frances Benjamin Johnston: Women of Class and Station* (Long Beach, California: California State University, 1979), 5.

photographs of students at the Hampton Agricultural and Industrial School (later, the Hampton Institute), an industrial arts and teachers' training school founded in 1868 to educate former slaves and Native American students,³⁵⁹ and the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, a boarding school for Native Americans, have been of particular interest to scholars of varying disciplines (Figs. 82-83).³⁶⁰ Other scholars have focused on Johnston's now well-known self-portraits (Figs. 84-85), which, according to literary scholar Victoria Olsen, subverted traditional ideas of womanhood by humorously addressing "the Victorian assumption that unconventional women were somehow 'masculine'."³⁶¹

More generally, Johnston's biographer Bettina Berch and others have examined the socio-historical context of the artist's photographs in order to provide clues as to why Johnston, who lived in a time period known for being restrictive towards women's political,

³⁵⁹ The Hampton Institute commissioned Johnston to complete a series of photographs of Hampton students that were to be included in the "American Negro Exhibit" at the Universal Exposition in Paris of 1900. These images, totaling over 150, were intended to illustrate "the educational and industrial progress of the Negro race in the United States" and to promote more particularly "the Hampton ideas of 'teaching by doing'." House Joint Resolution 75, 56th Congress, December 13, 1899. Reprinted in Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "American Visions at the Paris Exposition, 1900: Another Look at Frances Benjamin Johnston's Hampton Photographs," *Art Journal* vol. 57, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 61; W. E. B. DuBois, "The American Negro at Paris," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* vol. 22, no. 5 (November 1900): 577. In 1966, the Museum of Modern Art curated an exhibit that showcased these images and published a small selection in Lincoln Kirstein, ed., *The Hampton Album: 44 Photographs from an Album of Hampton Institute* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966). See also Sarah Bassnett, "From Public Relations to Art: Exhibiting Frances Benjamin Johnston's Hampton Institute Photographs," *History of Photography* vol. 32, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 152-168.

³⁶⁰ Lesser attention has been paid to Johnston's Tuskegee Institute photographs made in 1902. For more on Johnston's images from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, see Bettina Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens: The Life and Work of Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1864-1952* (Charlottesville, Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 56-59; Tova Cooper, "The Scenes of Seeing: Frances Benjamin Johnston and Visualizations of the 'Indian' in Black, White, and Native Educational Contexts," *American Literature* vol. 83, no. 3 (September 2011): 509-545; and Eric Margolis, "Looking at Discipline, Looking at Labour: Photographic Representations of Indian Boarding Schools," *Visual Studies* vol. 19, no. 1 (2004): 72-96.

³⁶¹ Victoria Olsen, "Sum of Her Parts: Frances Benjamin Johnston's Self-Portraits Show a Woman Who Could Play Contrasting Roles," *Smithsonian Magazine* vol. 41, no. 2 (May 2010): 10.

professional, and personal lives, was able to overstep gender barriers and succeed in the professional world. Berch argues that Johnston actively resisted and ignored the stifling limitations of the Victorian era by choosing to surround herself with other independent women and by never considering her gender to be an impediment to her professional life.³⁶² Similarly, historian C. Jane Gover has briefly discussed Johnston's central role in what she termed "an informal network" of American women photographers.³⁶³ She argues that this "photographic network involved women in an unstructured, voluntary arrangement which reflected the desire of women to participate in the arts and to encourage one another."³⁶⁴ Gover views Johnston as a "catalytic force" within this support system of women photographers, pointing to Johnston's contributions as a mentor, friend, and critic which helped to inspire and educate other women in the field.

This chapter extends Gover's broad overview of Johnston's role within this network to more closely examine how she utilized strategies of sisterhood to further her own career and the careers of her colleagues, as well as to encourage other women across the country who wanted to "take up the camera." By thoroughly analyzing Johnston's professional relationships, personal correspondence, published essays, public lectures, and her involvement in curating the first exhibition of American women photographers' work abroad, I demonstrate how one photographer used collaborative strategies of sisterhood that most women artists were also utilizing to achieve their own professional success. While Johnston was indeed an influential force for women in photography, the use of

³⁶² Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 143-144. Johnston was able to do this, Berch contends, because of her early upbringing in an egalitarian home where she learned the value of hard work and the importance of education.

³⁶³ C. Jane Gover, *The Positive Image: Women Photographers in Turn of the Century America* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 53.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

strategic sisterhood was not unique to her, nor was she the first to promote such methods. The point I want to make—and where this chapter differs from Gover’s account—is that women artists in all media were collaborating in these ways, were encouraging each other and lifting one another up, and that this was the regular experience of women artists at the turn of the century. By isolating Johnston as the “center” of it all, Gover’s account (and other historical accounts that make “masters” out of artists like Cassatt and Morisot) negates the lived experience of the vast majority of women artists.

Women and Photography in the Late Nineteenth Century

From its inception in the early nineteenth century, photography had been considered an appropriate artistic outlet for women, who were often excluded from the art academies and exhibitions of the so-called high arts of painting and sculpture. Like popular illustration, photography was viewed by many established artists with a degree of skepticism because of its relatively new status in the art world and its dependence upon methods of mechanical reproduction. Many critics dismissed photography as a machine-driven, science-based practice rather than one rooted in the same creative and artistic principles as the more traditional, so-called “high” arts of painting and sculpture.³⁶⁵ For

³⁶⁵ The terms “high” and “low” are often used when discussing modernist painting in the first half of the twentieth century. This terminology was popularized in Clement Greenberg’s 1939 essay, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” in which he pitted the high art of modernist painting against popular culture, “including popular, commercial art and literature with their chromeotypes, magazine covers, illustrations, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics, Tin Pan Alley music, tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc., etc.” Later museum exhibitions and scholarly texts, including the 1990 exhibition, “High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture,” held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have continued to explore, critique, and discuss the implications of this distinction. Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” 39. However, debates about the elite or not-so-elite status of various forms of visual culture have been ongoing in American culture for much longer, with various terminology being used. For a discussion on the history of the constructs of “high” and “low” in the American art world, see Johnston, *Seeing High and Low*, 1-24. Johnston’s essay

instance, the British critic Francis Palgrave (1788-1861) placed photography alongside the likes of other modern inventions that were so quickly changing the landscape and way of life during the mid-nineteenth century, opining that the “steam-engine and furnace, the steel plate, the roller, the press, the Daguerreotype, the Voltaic battery, and the lens, are the antagonist principles of art.”³⁶⁶

Because of photography’s second-class status in the artistic hierarchy, the medium was deemed a suitable pursuit for women in part because it did not threaten men’s dominant roles in the art world and the larger social sphere. Unlike the fine arts, which had rigid academic standards and policies that had been established for centuries, photography was a new artistic outlet without the national schools, organizations, and canons of great masters that limited or discouraged women’s participation. Additionally, many amateur photographers developed their images inside their homes, or sent their film away by mail to a professional who would develop the images for a fee. As a result, women could practice photography from the comfort of their own homes—a factor that was of increasing importance to a culture that was threatened by the rise of the New Woman and women’s increased participation in consumer society and the work force. Furthermore, the subject matter of both amateur and art photography of the late nineteenth century, when debates about photography’s legitimacy as an art form were at a peak, focused primarily on portraiture, landscape, and domestic scenes, all of which were deemed appropriate creative

provides an overview of the history of the constructions of “high” and “low” in the American art world; the origins of these constructs in critical thought, from Plato to Greenberg; how “high” and “low” have been defined according to their subject, medium, function, etc.; and how these constructs have been fostered and supported by art institutions and audiences. See also Michele H. Bogart’s bibliography on the debate over cultural hierarchies in Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 303-304.

³⁶⁶ Francis Palgrave, “The Fine Arts in Florence,” *Quarterly Review* vol. 66, no. 132 (September 1840): 326.

subjects for women. Moreover, photography was often viewed as an extension of a woman's primary duties as caretaker of the home. As mothers and wives, women were responsible for documenting and recording their family's lives—and photography offered them the means to do so while still exercising their creative minds.

Critics writing on both sides of the Atlantic recognized the benefits of photography as a creative, even professional, pursuit for women. Writing in 1873, British photographer Cornelius Jabez Hughes (1819-1884) noted that “in photography there is room for a larger amount of female labour... it is a field exactly suited to even the conventional notions of women's capacity.”³⁶⁷ Some writers attributed women's aptitude for photography to their innate feminine qualities, claiming that the skills required of photography fit a woman's natural disposition. For instance, writer and photographer Margaret Bisland argued in *Outing* magazine in 1890 that, “photography appeals directly to a woman's intelligence, demands constant exercise of her powers of judgment, giving her in return rapid and beautiful reward.”³⁶⁸ Others took advantage of the popular association between women and photography by targeting their products and marketing campaigns to this new audience. George Eastman (1854-1932), creator of the first handheld Kodak camera, created fashionable cameras that were specifically marketed to the New Woman. The Vest Pocket Vanity camera could be coordinated to match any outfit and the Vanity Kodak Ensemble even included a lipstick case, compact, mirror, and change purse (Fig. 86).³⁶⁹ Eastman specifically targeted women through advertisements that introduced the world to the Kodak

³⁶⁷ C. Jabez Hughes, “Photography as an Industrial Occupation for Women,” *Photographic News* vol. 18, no. 765 (May 9, 1873): 218.

³⁶⁸ Margaret Bisland, “Women and Their Cameras,” *Outing* vol. 17 (October 1890): 38.

³⁶⁹ For more on Kodak's advertising campaigns, see Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

Girl, a modern woman who traveled the world, took care of her family, participated actively in sports, and enjoyed leisure time with friends. For example, the “Take Your Kodak with You” campaign and advertisements featuring the Kodak Girl on vacation in various locales referenced the modern woman’s ability to move between public and private spheres (Figs. 87-88). Whereas women had previously been limited to the domestic sphere of the home, the New Woman of the late nineteenth century went to college, had a career, shopped wherever she wanted, and more—and Kodak encouraged her to document it all.

The idea that photography was an artistic pursuit that especially appealed to women was spread in popular ladies’ magazines, such as *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Godey’s Magazine*, and *The Cosmopolitan*, which encouraged women’s involvement in the field.³⁷⁰ In 1893, for instance, one writer for *The Cosmopolitan* lauded the efforts of women in photography, noting that “unlike the gun, the racquet and the oar, the camera offers a field where women can compete with men upon equal terms; and that some women have so successfully striven should encourage more to follow in their lead.”³⁷¹ Articles on professional and amateur women photographers provided readers with models of success and examples of their work. In 1898, *Godey’s Magazine* published an essay on Mrs. N. Gray Bartlett in “Triumphs in Amateur Photography,” a five-part series that highlighted the work of some of the best-known photographers in the country, including Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) and F. Holland Day (1864-1933).³⁷² Art journals also took notice of women’s photographic work. *The Craftsman*, *The Photogram*, and Stieglitz’s *Camera*

³⁷⁰ See, for instance, Marion Foster Washburne, “A New Profession for Women: Photography and the Success Which Follows Earnest Endeavor and Diligent Work,” *Godey’s Magazine* vol. 134, no. 800 (February 1897): 123-128.

³⁷¹ Moore, “Women Experts in Photography,” 581.

³⁷² Marmaduke Humphrey, “Triumphs in Amateur Photography—V: Mrs. N. Gray Bartlett,” *Godey’s Magazine* vol. 136, no. 814 (April 1898): 368-387.

Work are just a few of the many publications that catered to professional artists that consistently featured editorials on women's participation in the field and essays on specific, successful women photographers.³⁷³

By the end of the nineteenth century, many critics and artists viewed women photographers as equals to their male colleagues. Bisland, writing for *Outing* in 1890, proposed that "beyond 'any possible, probably shadow of doubt,' women with their cameras surpass all traditions and stand as equals of men in their newly-found and now most ardently-practiced art."³⁷⁴ However, in Bisland's opinion, photography offered women the opportunity to surpass men for the first time. Acknowledging the barriers women had faced in the fine arts throughout history, she argued "No supreme female artist has even been developed with [brush, paint, or sculptor's chisel]. She waited and hoarded her strengths and to-day she finds the medium through which she expresses her conception of art. Our greatest painters have been men; have we not a right to expect our most famous photographers to be women?"³⁷⁵

A "Thorough Mistress of the Art": Frances Benjamin Johnston's Early Career³⁷⁶

It was during this moment that Johnston turned to photography as a career, taking advantage of both the numerous technological advancements that made using a camera more practical and the cultural attitudes towards photography that made it more accessible

³⁷³ For just few examples, see Charles H. Caffin, "Mrs. Käsebier's Work—An Appreciation," *Camera Work* vol. 1 (January 1903): 17-19; "Successful Photography for Women," *Wilson's Photographic Magazine* vol. 50, no. 5 (May 1913): 211-213; and Osborne I. Yellott, "Miss Frances B. Johnston," *Photo Era* vol. 4, no. 4 (April 1900): 108-114.

³⁷⁴ Bisland, "Women and Their Cameras," 36, 38.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁷⁶ "For and About Women," *The Washington Post*, February 19, 1893, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

to women. Johnston was born on January 15, 1864, in Grafton, West Virginia. She was the only child of Anderson Doniphon Johnston (1828-1907) and Frances Antoinette Benjamin (b. 1837) (Fig. 89). The Johnston family moved to Washington, D.C., sometime between 1874 and 1876, where Johnston's father worked as the head bookkeeper for the United States Treasury Department. Johnston's mother was a journalist and drama critic for various newspapers in the D.C. area. For the *Baltimore Sun*, she wrote a column under the pseudonym "The Lady Correspondent," and she also contributed articles to the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, specializing in congressional activities and "any tidbits of Washington information she could broadcast."³⁷⁷ Her mother's public career provided Johnston with an example of female professional success at a young age. As communications scholar Cynthia M. Lont has rightly pointed out, "there is little doubt that Johnston's mother's position as a journalist (an unusual position for a woman in the 1800s) guided Johnston. Johnston's mother influenced Frances' educational route, her view on the role of women, her access to famous people and places, her feelings about women's accomplishments, and her expectations of herself."³⁷⁸

Johnston studied art at Notre Dame Convent in Govanston, Maryland, and then, for two years beginning in 1883, at the Académie Julian in Paris where she enrolled in traditional academic courses with the goal of gaining the skills needed to work as an illustrator (Fig. 90). Upon her return to the United States in 1886, Johnston joined the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Art Students' League, where she took classes, assisted

³⁷⁷ Sarah Eugenie Reeder, "Reevaluating the Carnegie Survey: New Uses for Frances Benjamin Johnston's Pictorial Archive" (Master's thesis, College of William and Mary, 2007), 22; Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 11.

³⁷⁸ Cynthia M. Lont, "Frances Benjamin Johnston: Mother of Photojournalism," in *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives*, ed. Theresa Carilli and Jane Campbell (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), 241.

with administrative duties, and, in 1888, served as treasurer.³⁷⁹ Johnston was so involved with the Art Students' League that *The Washington Post* reported that she was one of its most enthusiastic members and "to her untiring work much of its success is due."³⁸⁰ Johnston's early dedication to service within the arts community would become a trademark of her later career, when she served on juries and assisted with the founding and administrative duties of several arts and professional organizations.

Johnston's career benefitted early on from the aid of female friends and colleagues.

Johnston later recounted that

it was during my work [at the Art Students' League] that I found an opportunity through one of my warmest friends and fellow students, Miss Elizabeth Sylvester, to supply a New York Press association with rough sketches and photographs for illustration. This side issue grew so rapidly and proved so profitable that I finally decided to buy a camera and to take the photographs myself when I could not fill an order by purchasing them at the regular dealers.³⁸¹

Sylvester, a Washington correspondent for a New York-based newspaper, had asked Johnston to temporarily stand in for her, an opportunity that quickly turned into more commissions and opportunities with other periodicals.³⁸² Lelia Mechlin, another member

³⁷⁹ Moore, "Women Experts in Photography," 586. Some sources claim Johnston also taught classes for a short period of time at the Art Students' League, but Johnston refuted these claims by saying that she while she sometimes covered classes for other teachers, it was not enough to warrant mention. See Susan Hunter, "The Art of Photography: A Visit to the Studio of Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston," c. 1895, reel 24, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Sources also differ in their accounts of when Johnston returned to the United States and enrolled at the Art Students' League. See Maria Elizabeth Ausherman, *The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston* (Gainesville, Florida: The University Press of Florida), 14; Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 12; Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2010), 348.

³⁸⁰ "Art Students at Work," *Washington Post*, October 16, 1888, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

³⁸¹ Hunter, "The Art of Photography."

³⁸² For more on Sylvester, see "Miss Elizabeth Sylvester," *The American Woman* (August 26, 1893), reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

of the Art Students' League and a friend of Johnston's, helped to introduce Johnston's work to the art editor of the *Washington Star*.³⁸³

Johnston entered into the field of print media just as photoduplication in magazines, as opposed to engravings or drawn illustrations, was becoming more prevalent, which worked perfectly for her burgeoning career in documentary photography. Some of Johnston's earliest work involved writing essays and providing the accompanying photographic illustrations for essays that were published in numerous magazines, including *Demorest's Family Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Women's Home Journal*.³⁸⁴ Johnston tackled a diverse range of topics that allowed her access to places and subjects that might otherwise have been considered off-limits to women of a certain class, such as caves, military vessels, factory workers, and miners (Figs. 91-92).³⁸⁵ In addition to her documentary work, Johnston expanded her photography business in 1895 to include portraiture. In January of that year, Johnston opened her own photographic studio, located behind the home she shared with her family on V Street (Fig. 93). The two-story building included an office space, a dark room, a reception area, and a studio space outfitted with a state-of-the-art lighting system that involved a sheer curtain that could be raised and lowered at Johnston's discretion (Fig. 94).³⁸⁶ There, Johnston completed her commissioned assignments and arranged portrait sessions by appointment for the wealthy and famous

³⁸³ Ausherman, *The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston*, 17.

³⁸⁴ For a list of Johnston's illustrated essays, see Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 165.

³⁸⁵ See, for instance, Johnston's many illustrated articles, including "Through the Coal Country with a Camera," *Demorest's Family Magazine* vol. 28, no. 5 (March 1892): 257-266, and "Mammoth Cave by Flashlight," *Demorest's Family Magazine* vol. 28, no. 8 (June 1892): 445-456.

³⁸⁶ For more on Johnston's studio, see Kelsey T. Frady, "Frances Benjamin Johnston: Imaging the New Woman Through Photography" (Master's thesis, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2012), 30-43.

elite of the city. Her patrons included White House officials, foreign diplomats, and several Presidents and their families, earning her the unofficial title of “America’s court photographer.” Her clients also included a wide range of influential activists, artists, writers, and businessmen, such as British-American writer Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924), French painter Benjamin Constant (1845-1902), and women’s rights activist Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) (Figs. 95-96). In addition to serving as the site of her business, Johnston’s studio quickly became a hub for artistic and literary figures in the city. The space was well-equipped for the weekly “at homes” she hosted for her close friends and colleagues, but it also worked perfectly for larger gatherings as well (Fig. 97). Much of the furniture and photographic equipment in the large studio on the second floor was collapsible or portable so that it could easily be moved to create space for parties and dancing—a piano was also kept in this room for that very purpose. Johnston and her friends formed an “artistic avant-garde group” called “The Push” made up of literary and artistic figures in Washington, D.C.³⁸⁷ As a founding member of the group, Johnston hosted parties for The Push in her studio, which “often involved elaborate costumes and makeup and silliness” (Fig. 98).³⁸⁸

Early in her career, Johnston’s work was requested for print in daily periodicals, newspapers, ladies’ magazines, and photography journals on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1893, for example, Henry Snowden Ward (1865-1911), a London-based photographer and editor of *The Practical Photographer*, wrote to Johnston to ask for examples of her work to be included in a series of articles that “deal[t] with Lady amateurs” in the *Illustrated London News*. In the same letter, he also asked if he could publish her work in an article

³⁸⁷ Cooper, “The Scenes of Seeing,” 509.

³⁸⁸ Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 28.

he was preparing for one of the country's "principal Ladies' Journals."³⁸⁹ Johnston apparently heeded this request, because in a later note, Ward thanked Johnston for her contributions and used the opportunity to promote *The Photogram*, the journal he founded and edited with his wife, American photographer Catharine Weed Barnes Ward (1851-1913), from 1894 to 1905.³⁹⁰ He included early drafts of the journal for Johnston's consideration, writing that "I think you will find it a thoroughly good magazine, and it will, naturally, take a great deal of interest in the work of women." Ward continued, "Our object is to have all our friends as closely in touch with us as possible. If you can occasionally contribute short articles or notes, we shall be very glad indeed."³⁹¹ This exchange between Johnston and one of the world's leading photographers is reflective of Johnston's quickly-growing reputation, as well as the status of women's photography in general, which was considered by the early 1890s to be, "naturally," a central concern of the field. As Johnston's career flourished and her standing in the field grew even more, she took on a similar role as the Wards, writing essays and promoting the work of her female colleagues

³⁸⁹ Letter from Henry Snowden Ward to Frances Benjamin Johnston, October 24, 1893, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

³⁹⁰ In 1893, after marrying Henry Snowden Ward, Catherine moved to England from Albany, New York, where she and her husband co-edited *The Practical Photographer* and later co-founded and co-edited *The Photogram*. After 1905, *The Photogram* was published under the title *The Photographic Monthly*, which the Wards edited together until 1910. These publications continued to be an avenue where the Wards, particularly Catherine, promoted women photographers, including Johnston. This editorial work was an outgrowth of her previous, active involvement the United States' publishing industry. In New York, Catherine was a member of the editorial staff of the *American Amateur Photographer*, where she wrote a regular column entitled "Women's Work," which offered advice and discussed practical issues of photography. She also edited a monthly column for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper's* Department of Amateur Photography and wrote "Amateur Photography for Women," a monthly column for *Outing* magazine. For a longer discussion of Catherine Ward's role as a promoter of women photographers, see 183-184 in this chapter, and Margaret Denny, "Catharine Weed Barnes Ward: Advocate for Victorian Women Photographers," *History of Photography* vol. 36, no. 2 (May 2012): 156-171.

³⁹¹ Letter from Henry Snowden Ward to Frances Benjamin Johnston, December 29, 1893, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

in the United States to ensure that women had access to the press and other exhibition outlets, and by doing so extended that inner circle of photographers to include many women.

By 1904, Johnston had, as one commentator noted, gained enough recognition through her documentary and portrait work to “become almost a household [name]. There are few families to which the illustrated periodical does not gain entrance, and, through these illustrations, Miss Johnston has made herself known in nearly every hamlet in the Union.”³⁹² Newspapers and photography magazines consistently touted Johnston as the leading woman photographer in the country, remarking that she was “second to no photographer in the country.”³⁹³ Johnston’s professional successes and distinct reputation made her a role model for other women, and gave Johnston a platform from which to encourage women across the country to participate in the growing field of art photography and to promote American women photographers on an international scale.

Johnston as Curator and Lecturer

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, European governments sponsored national exhibitions to commemorate historical events and promote the progress made by their own country in such areas as technology, manufacturing, science, and the arts. The Crystal Palace Exhibition in London (1851) was the first of these grand exhibitions to invite outside countries to showcase their achievements alongside one another.³⁹⁴ Contemporaries

³⁹² “A Famous Photographer,” *Young People’s Weekly*, January 21, 1905, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

³⁹³ Unidentified clipping, *Free Press and Courier*, February 16, 1894, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

³⁹⁴ Alternatively known as World’s Fairs, Great Exhibitions, or Expositions Universelles, international exhibitions have been of much interest to scholars in a variety of disciplines. See

viewed international exhibitions as world stages where countries could display their art, inventions, and sociological developments to showcase their own progress and to promote the advancement of society. France, a country that had long been involved in the staging of international exhibitions, hosted the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in its capital city of Paris to celebrate the arrival of the twentieth century and to display the progress that had been made throughout the world during the entire nineteenth century.³⁹⁵ The Paris Exposition, as it came to be known, included nearly eight-three thousand official exhibitors from over forty countries and drew over forty-eight million visitors during the eight months it was open to the public, a remarkable attendance that was not surpassed until the 1967 International and Universal Exposition in Montreal.³⁹⁶

With that theme of progress in mind, Johnston used the Paris Exposition as an opportunity to encourage women's advancement in the field of photography. In April of 1900, Johnston received a letter from Ellen M. Henrotin (1847-1922), a wealthy society woman and social reformer, on behalf of Bertha Honoré Palmer. Palmer, an honorary commissioner for the United States Delegation to the Universal Exposition, had been responsible for much of the organization of the Woman's Building at the 1893 World's

John Allwood, *The Great Exhibitions* (London: Cassell & Collier Macmillan Publishers, Ltd., 1977); Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988); Wolfram Kaiser, "The Great Derby Race: Strategies of Cultural Representation at Nineteenth-Century World Exhibitions," in *Culture and International History*, eds. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher, 45-59 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003); and Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

³⁹⁵ For studies focused specifically on the Exposition Universelle of 1900, hereafter referred to as the "Paris Exposition," see Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), and Diane P. Fischer, ed., *Paris 1900: The "American School" at the Universal Exposition* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

³⁹⁶ Bergman, "Visions of American Progress," 64.

Columbian Exposition in Chicago and was committed to representing the social advances of American women on the international level.³⁹⁷ For the Paris Exposition, Palmer took on the responsibility of “securing women delegates to the series of congresses [that were] held in connection” with the Exposition.³⁹⁸ In her letter, Henrotin inquired if Johnston would be willing to serve as a delegate to the International Congress on Photography and if she could also present “a short address on the work of Women in Photography and their specialties.”³⁹⁹ Though the role was unpaid, Johnston agreed to act as a delegate, becoming one of about twenty-five American women delegates to the various International Congresses.⁴⁰⁰ Of the five delegates to serve on the International Congress of Photography, which was held July 23 through July 28, Johnston was the only woman.⁴⁰¹

Prior to her participation in the Paris Exposition, Johnston had a long list of professional achievements to her name, including several appointments on photographic juries and involvement in numerous photography exhibitions and World’s Fairs, both at home and abroad. During the early stages of her career, Johnston worked as an apprentice to Thomas William Smillie (1843-1917), director of the Division of Photography at the National Museum (now the Smithsonian Institution). In 1893, Johnston assisted Smillie in making a series of photographs of the fairgrounds at the Chicago World’s Fair. These

³⁹⁷ For more on Palmer’s involvement in the Chicago World’s Fair, see Chapter Two, pgs. 90-95.

³⁹⁸ Letter from Ellen M. Henrotin (Mrs. Charles Henrotin), United States Commission to the Paris Exposition of 1900, to Frances Benjamin Johnston, April 12, 1900, reel 5, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Letters from Ellen M. Henrotin (Mrs. Charles Henrotin), United States Commission to the Paris Exposition of 1900, to Frances Benjamin Johnston, April 24, 1900, and May 25, 1900, reel 5, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁰¹ Stieglitz had been invited to act as a delegate but declined. Beatrice Tonneson (1871-1958), a Chicago-based photographer, was also invited to serve as a delegate on the Congress but was unable to travel due to the untimely death of her mother.

photographs were used to illustrate the United States Government Board report on the Exposition, and were also published in an article she wrote for *Demorest's Family Magazine* (Fig. 99).⁴⁰² She also exhibited photographs of Naval Academy students for the U.S. Navy's exhibition space at the fair and her illustrated book, *The White House*, was featured in the library of the Woman's Building.⁴⁰³ It was probably during this time in Chicago that Johnston became acquainted with Palmer, whom she included in her *Demorest's* article. Johnston also had prior experience working with photography exhibitions, starting in 1899 when she served on the jury for the second Philadelphia Salon of Photography, which was held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Fig. 100).⁴⁰⁴ After the Paris Exposition, Johnston continued to participate in World's Fairs by serving on photographic juries and documenting spaces and events, including the Pan-American Exposition (1901) in Buffalo, New York, and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904) in St. Louis, Missouri.

Johnston must have been excited about the opportunity to speak about American women's work in photography, as she immediately considered photographers to be included in her lecture and wrote a quick list of names of women whose work she was familiar with on the back of Henrotin's initial letter.⁴⁰⁵ She also reached out to several

⁴⁰² Gillian Greenhill Hannum, "Frances Benjamin Johnston: Promoting Women Photographers in *The Ladies' Home Journal*," *Nineteenth Century* vol. 24, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 24; Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Evolution of a Great Exhibition," *Demorest's Family Magazine* vol. 346, no. 28 (April 1892): 319-328.

⁴⁰³ Hannum, "Frances Benjamin Johnston," 24; "Work of District Women," *The Washington Post*, April 2, 1893, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁰⁴ Anne E. Peterson, *Women of Class and Station* (Long Beach, California: California State University, 1979), 11.

⁴⁰⁵ Letter from Ellen M. Henrotin (Mrs. Charles Henrotin), United States Commission to the Paris Exposition of 1900, to Frances Benjamin Johnston, April 12, 1900, reel 5, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. A list of seventeen women was written on the back of this letter in Johnston's handwriting. The list included "Miss Clarkson, Miss [Emma J.] Farnsworth, Mrs. C[atharine]

colleagues to ask if they could add to her list of women photographers, including Stieglitz; Juan C. Abel (1869-1960), a professional photographer and editor of *The Photographic Times*; Osborne I. Yellott (1871-1922), a Maryland lawyer who also practiced and wrote about photography; and F. Dundas Todd, the editor of *The Photo-Beacon*. Their responses were enthusiastic, if not very helpful in offering up names of successful women photographers. Though Stieglitz could not propose additional names for Johnston's list, his letter was encouraging. He wrote, "The women in this country are certainly doing great photographic work and deserve much commendation for their efforts."⁴⁰⁶ Yellott, who had published an essay on Johnston's work just months before, admitted that he was "much impressed with the prominent part [women of America] are taking [in photography]" and suggested that Johnston peruse the June issue of *The Photo Beacon* for more potential exhibitors.⁴⁰⁷ Abel, Yellott, and Todd did provide a few specific suggestions as to who might or might not be good additions to Johnston's exhibition, including the Minneapolis-based photographer Nellie M. C. Knappen and Helen Plummer Gatch, a portrait photographer from Salem, Oregon.⁴⁰⁸ Abel seems to have recognized the significance of Johnston's endeavor, as he was the only one of the four men to ask for a copy of her lecture,

W[ard] B[arnes] Ward, Miss [Emma J.] Fitz, Miss [Sarah Jane] Eddy, Miss Garrity, Miss Slade, Miss Martin, Mrs. [Gertrude] Kasebier [sic], Miss [Alice] Austin, Mrs. [Sarah] Sears, Miss [Zaida] Ben-Yusuf, Miss Floride Green, Miss [Eva L.] Watson, Miss [Amelia] Van Buren, Miss [Mathilde] Weil, and Miss [Rose] Clarke [sic]." Of these, the first eight names are crossed through. Because several of the women whose names have been crossed out were included in the exhibition, Johnston was presumably using this list to keep track of correspondence.

⁴⁰⁶ Letter from Alfred Stieglitz to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 8, 1900, reel 5, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁰⁷ Letter from Osborne I. Yellott to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 1, 1900, reel 5, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. See pg. 152, note 372.

⁴⁰⁸ Letter from Juan C. Abel to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 27, 1900; Letter from Osborne I. Yellott to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 1, 1900; and Letter from F. Dundas Todd to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 5, 1900, reel 5, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

noting that “it would be of great interest... and will probably otherwise appear only in French.”⁴⁰⁹ Johnston also sent a note to her friend and colleague, New York-based photographer Zaida Ben-Yusuf (1869-1933), to ask for her opinion regarding who should be included in the exhibition. Johnston and Ben-Yusuf had met two years prior when they exhibited their work together at the Camera Club of New York. Ben-Yusuf wrote back immediately, offering the names of “the Miss Selby’s” [sic], referring to the sisters Emily and Lillian Selby, who operated a portrait studio together as “The Misses Selby” in New York. In ending her letter, Ben-Yusuf expressed her confidence in Johnston, noting that “I am sure we are in good hands.”⁴¹⁰

With her list of names in hand, Johnston set about gathering photographs from women who had both private and professional studios across the country. On May 29, Johnston sent a three-page letter to each of the women she was considering in which she explained that the United States Commission “recognizes [the work of American women photographers] as unique, and it is their desire that the wonderful achievements of American women in photography should be adequately and worthily represented” at the International Photographic Congress.⁴¹¹ She asked each woman to provide a selection of prints they considered to be examples of their “most individual and distinctive” work.⁴¹² It

⁴⁰⁹ Letter from Juan C. Abel to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 27, 1900, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Unfortunately, Abel’s prediction was correct. There is no surviving transcript of Johnston’s lecture to the International Congress on Photography. Abel must have been inspired by Johnston’s project, however, as he went on to publish his own series of essays in 1901 entitled “Women Photographers and Their Work.” Juan C. Abel, “Women Photographers and Their Work,” *The Delineator* vol. 58, nos. 3-5 (September – November 1901): 406-411, 574-579, and 747-751.

⁴¹⁰ Letter from Zaida Ben-Yusuf to Frances Benjamin Johnston, May 31, 1900, reel 20, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴¹¹ Letter from Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1900, reel 20, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

was her goal to gather a selection of women's work that would show "as much diversity as possible."⁴¹³ In return, Johnston received letters from twenty-nine women, although her personal notes and later correspondence suggest that she had initially considered many more women to be included in the exhibition. It is likely that time constraints and the photographers' own busy schedules, not to mention the logistics and costs associated with shipping, prevented many women from participating. Most of the photographers Johnston contacted were those whose work she was familiar with and who came from similar economical and educational backgrounds as Johnston. Although there were African-American women photographers at the time of the Paris Exposition, including Elnora Teal, Elise Forrest Harleston (1891-1970), and Winifred Hall Allen, Johnston did not approach them to be included in the exhibition.⁴¹⁴ This could be attributed to a few reasons, including the fact that Johnston had very little time to organize the exhibition or that she was not familiar with their work. Although the photographs in Johnston's exhibition have been discussed by scholars as an account of the lives of American women, it should be noted that this account is not entirely inclusive. Though they came from rural and urban areas across the country, from Rhode Island to California, the women represented were all white, middle- to upper-class, and had presumably some level of education or training.

The letters that Johnston received in response to her request reveal much about the lives of amateur and professional women photographers, from practical details about their

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ For a brief discussion of the opportunities available to African-American women in photography in the early twentieth century, see Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 151. For a more thorough examination of this topic, see Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1986), and Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000).

working methods to personal reflections on the difficulties of balancing a career with the duties of motherhood. While some of the letters convey feelings of insecurity and self-doubt, there are just as many letters that show ambition, confidence, and assured self-awareness. That these women felt they could disclose such personal thoughts to Johnston speaks again to the role she played as a leader in her field and the respect she had garnered from other women photographers. It also speaks to a kind of camaraderie that was woven through the network of women artists, a camaraderie that is underscored by the many requests Johnston received to spend time with these women outside of professional obligations in hope that their relationships might be more than just professional.

Some women offered their thoughts and ideas about the state of photography as an art form, and on women's place in the field. Fannie L. Elton, who contributed two photographs to Johnston's exhibition, remarked that she started to take pictures in response to the artistic photographs she had seen, believing she could do better. Elton wrote, "Men, with a woeful lack of ability and artistic sense, were making photographs. On every hand, these photographs—they could not be called pictures—were chiefly of the 'look-please-please,' 'rather-go-to-the-dentist' class. I believed there was something better in the art and with this conviction strong within me, I opened a studio on Euclid Avenue eight years ago where I studied and prospered."⁴¹⁵ Eva Watson (1867-1935) also commented on the gender dynamics in the field of photography in her response to Johnston's invitation when she revealed her apprehension at being segregated from the rest of the photography world:

I am a little bothered in regard to the world's fair exhibit. It has been one of my special hobbies—and one I have been very emphatic about—not to have my work represented as "women's work." I want it judged by only one standard—irrespective of sex... Personally I would not want anything said

⁴¹⁵ Letter from Fannie L. Elton to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 23, 1900, reel 20, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

of me unless it was simply that I was a serious student of painting, and am now a most serious worker in Photography.⁴¹⁶

At the International Congress on Photography on July 25, Johnston presented a paper entitled “The Work of the Women in the United States in Photography.” Henrotin had suggested that Johnston prepare a “more or less technical paper,” but, as the lecture’s title and Johnston’s personal notes show, she rejected that advice in favor of promoting the work and achievements of specific women photographers.⁴¹⁷ Indeed, Johnston’s initial letter to the exhibitors hints that she had intended from the beginning to use this opportunity to introduce the world to American women photographers. To assist with the preparation of her lecture, Johnston had asked each exhibitor to provide a brief biographical sketch and, if possible, a portrait of themselves. She specifically asked each woman to share how they “happened to adopt photography as an art or profession,” as well as to describe their “technical and artistic” training, any special techniques they had developed, and “something of the methods and conditions under which [they] work[ed].”⁴¹⁸ Since no transcript of her lecture exists, these biographical sketches, along with the official report and notes recorded at the Congress, provide insight into the content of Johnston’s lecture.

In fluent French, Johnston explained to the Congress that American women

have found in Photography a lucrative profession or an agreeable medium of artistic expression; they are educated in their art and are friends of progress; they use all the means that the science of modern photography has put at their fingertips. They are members of photographic societies and take

⁴¹⁶ Letter from Eva Watson to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 10, 1900, reel 20 Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Watson married Martin Schütze and changed her last name to Watson-Schütze.

⁴¹⁷ Letter from Ellen M. Henrotin (Mrs. Charles Henrotin), United States Commission to the Paris Exposition of 1900, to Frances Benjamin Johnston, May 25, 1900, reel 5, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴¹⁸ Letter from Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1900, reel 20, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

part in very important Expositions where they have often won high awards, both in the United States and abroad.⁴¹⁹

As Johnston spoke, her audience could see that the images on display supported these claims.

Ultimately, Johnston collected approximately 150 prints from thirty-one photographers who specialized in a variety of subjects.⁴²⁰ The exhibition was held in the photographic section of the Palace of Letters and Science. It included work by both professional and amateur photographers from a variety of social backgrounds and geographical regions, a decision that worked to highlight the multiple ways that women in the United States could choose to practice photography.⁴²¹ Some, like Ben-Yusuf and Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), were well-known in the art world and operated independent studios of their own, often publishing their work in art journals and magazines.

The wide range of artistic styles represented in Johnston's exhibition spoke to her influence and to the extensiveness of the American women photographer circle, not to

⁴¹⁹ M. S. Pector, *Exposition universelle de 1900: Congrès international de photographie, process-verbaux, rapport, notes et documens divers* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1901), 44.

⁴²⁰ The number of photographs in the exhibition has been reported differently in various sources. At the Congress, the report documented that 200 prints were on view. As Bergman has explained, Johnston may have added photographs to the exhibition as they arrived in Paris, or Pector may have simply misestimated the number of photographs.

⁴²¹ Women included in the Exposition with the number of prints exhibited in parenthesis: Frances Allen and Mary Allen (4), Alice Austin (7), Mary Bartlett (5), Zaida Ben-Yusuf (5), Rose Clark and Elizabeth Flint Wade (8), Annie Nelson Crowell (2), Sarah Jane Eddy (4), Fannie Elton (2), Emma Justine Farnsworth (6), Floride Green (5), Gertrude Käsebier (9), Edith Lounsberry (4), Emily Mew (3), Mary Paschall (3), Annie Pilsbury (8), Virginia Prall (8), Addie Robinson (3), Mary Schäffer (3), Sarah Sears (4), Emily Selby and Lillian Selby (4), Virginia Sharp (4), Alta Bell Sniff (4), Amelia Van Buren (6), Eva Gamble Walborn (4), Eva Watson (12), Mathilde Weil (10), Myra Wiggins (4), and Mabel Osgood Wright (2). Mary Devins was invited to show her work, but Johnston's letter did not reach her in time. Devins' work was included in the later showing of the exhibition at the Paris Photo-Club in early 1901. Bergman, *Visions of American Progress*, 75, note 9. See Laura Ilise Meister, "Women Photographers in the Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection," in *Ambassadors of Progress*, 137-187, for detailed biographies of each of the exhibitors.

mention Johnston's ability to quickly organize a large, international exhibition in a limited amount of time from another country. Most of the photographs in the exhibition were portraits and genre scenes, although there were also nature images, landscapes, still-lives, and figure studies.⁴²² These subjects were popular with both men and women photographers, suggesting that despite common associations with portraiture, still-lives, and images of nature with women's art (particularly women's painting), the women photographers in the Paris Exposition chose their subject matter based on current trends in the field, not what they were restricted to portray.⁴²³

Of all the types of photography included in the exhibition, portraiture was the most prominent. Of these, women were the most common subjects, though their representation was extremely varied. In some artistic portraits, women were depicted as the types of idealized characters that were also popular in painting and sculpture. For instance, Käsebier's *The Manger* (c. 1900) depicts a veiled woman holding a swaddled baby in a barn, which is consistent with her Pictorialist desire to raise photography to the level of high art by invoking the same kind of scenes that had been favored by painters for centuries, in this case, the theme of sacred motherhood embodied by the Virgin Mary (Fig. 101).⁴²⁴

⁴²² Ibid., 77.

⁴²³ Scholars have argued that women have been relegated to painting certain subjects because of their restricted position in society. For example, Griselda Pollock has demonstrated that Cassatt and Morisot painted domestic scenes and images of mothers with their children because social prescriptions prevented them from painting the night cafés and nude figure studies that were popular subject matter for male Impressionist painters at the time. This does not seem to be the case with photography because both male and female photographers portrayed similar subjects. Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 50-90.

⁴²⁴ For more about Käsebier and her work, see William Innes Homer, *A Pictorial Heritage: The Photographs of Gertrude Käsebier* (Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Art Museum, 1979); Barbara L. Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier: The Photographer and Her Photographs* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992); and Mary Ann Tighe, "Gertrude Käsebier," *American Photographer* vol. 8 (May 1982): 66-76.

Ben-Yusuf's *The Odor of Pomegranates* (c. 1900) calls upon more contemporary trends in painting. The photograph depicts a young woman standing in profile in front of a dark, paisley print curtain and holding a pomegranate at face level (Fig. 102).⁴²⁵ The figure's partially-obscured face, hidden beneath a veil of her dark hair, and her ornately-patterned dress allow her to blend into her surroundings, recalling the paintings of James Abbott McNeil Whistler (1834-1903) or William Merritt Chase (1849-1916) in which women merely serve as decorative objects alongside the decorative objects that surround them. Alternatively, other photographers sought out more common subjects for their portraits, preferring to document the lived experiences of real women. Frances and Mary Allen's *A Holbein Woman* (c. 1900) is entirely devoid of a setting and instead focuses completely on the sitter, a modest-looking, unidealized, older woman whose gaze avoids the viewer (Fig. 103).

The collection of women's work that Johnston amassed clearly revealed that women photographers in America were experimenting with different artistic styles just like their male counterparts and that they used the female body to do so. Many different types of American women were showcased in Johnston's exhibition, none of which recall the contrived illustrations of Charles Dana Gibson or the critical, over-exaggerated caricatures of magazines like *Punch*. The women represented in the photographs (and, in many instances, the photographers themselves) rejected the notion that women could be *either* Victorian, proper, and completely feminine *or* manly and unattractive usurpers of

⁴²⁵ For more on Ben-Yusuf and her work, see Frank A. Goodyear, III, *Zaida Ben-Yusuf: New York Portrait Photographer* (London: Merrell Publishers, 2008); Sadakichi Hartmann, "Zaida Ben-Yusuf: A Purist," *The Photographic Times* vol. 31 (October 1899): 449-455; Elizabeth Poulson, *Zaida* (Tempe, Arizona: School of Art, Arizona State University, 1985); and Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 71-77.

traditionally masculine roles. Indeed, when given the opportunity to show the world a selection of American photography, Johnston showcased not only an excellent collection of works characterized by a variety of subject matter and superb technical skill in line with what the (male) photographic masters were creating, she also presented to the world the efforts and successes of a group of empowered, professional New Women.⁴²⁶ The exhibition proved liberating for the women photographers involved in that it allowed them the freedom to present to the world images of the American woman from their point of view. While the images themselves may not have been radical in the sense of blatantly opposing Victorian traditions—the subject matter was quite tame and in line with what their contemporaries promoted—the women who produced them were enacting through their work the progressive ideals of a new century.

Through both her lecture and exhibition, Johnston presented the accomplishments of American women photographers to an international audience as yet another example of progress on exhibit at the Paris Exposition. Johnston's exhibition was a success and garnered praise from Parisian audiences. In the International Congress on Photography official report, M. Sosthène Pector noted observed that the prints were received by “the members of the Congress who loudly show[ed] their admiration” and at least one American newspaper reported that the photographs were “wanted for permanent exhibition in Paris.”⁴²⁷ Johnston's efforts did not go unnoticed at home, either. *The Evening Star*,

⁴²⁶ Again, it is necessary to repeat here that this trope of the New Woman was a very particular and limiting type of woman. Although women of color were portrayed elsewhere in the Exposition by Johnston—and lower-class factory workers had been a subject of Johnston's documentary photography several times prior to the Exposition—these women were not present in the photographs featured in Johnston's all-women's photography exhibition.

⁴²⁷ Pector, *Exposition universelle de 1900*, 44; “Paris Wants Her Photographs: An American Woman's Prize-winning Exhibit at the Exposition,” *The Washington Post*, October 21, 1900, 19.

Johnston's hometown newspaper, applauded her exhibition and anticipated its arrival in that city (though this was never realized).⁴²⁸ International audiences equally appreciated Johnston's efforts. The Russian delegate to the Congress was so impressed that he requested that the exhibit travel to St. Petersburg and Moscow in the fall of that same year. The exhibition then traveled back to France to be shown at the Paris Photo-Club from January 24 through February 13, 1901.

Part of the exhibition's success can be explained by the fact that it was one of the few exhibitions of artistic photography from the United States that was on view at the Paris Exposition. Many photographers, including Stieglitz, had opted out of showing their work at the Exposition in protest against photography's placement in Group Three (Letters and Sciences) instead of Group Two (Fine Arts). Stieglitz, who had been asked to select American photographs for display in the Exposition, instead used the opportunity to promote his agenda of raising photography to the level of high art. Unfortunately for Stieglitz, his request to have photography exhibited alongside painting and sculpture was denied. In response, he and many other photographers boycotted the Exposition.⁴²⁹

Just as the United States saw the Paris Exposition as an opportunity to showcase American progress on all fronts, Johnston used her exhibition of women's photography to affirm women's progress in that field. Furthermore, not only did the exhibition effectively show how women have succeeded in the field of photography, it allowed American women to control how they were represented to the rest of the world. This is one important way

⁴²⁸ "Progress in Photography," 7.

⁴²⁹ As a result of this boycott, curator Bronwyn A. E. Griffith notes, "the women photographers presented by [Johnston] formed the only collective representation of American Pictorialist photography in Paris until F. Holland Day's exhibition of the "New School of Photography" in February 1901." Bronwyn A. E. Griffith, ed., *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901* (London: University Press of New England, 2001), 18.

that sisterhood as a strategy of women *artists* benefitted and extended to other American women. In her discussion of Johnston's Hampton Institute photographs, which were also on view at the Paris Exposition, historian Jeannene M. Przyblyski argues that the Paris Exposition, and Johnston's photographs of Hampton Institute students, in particular, provided African Americans with a "key site for the social construction of the 'New Negro'," an effort by African Americans to craft a positive self-representation in the face of stereotypes.⁴³⁰ Johnston's exhibition of women photographers' work served a similar purpose for (white, middle- and upper-class) American women, but was perhaps more effective in terms of self-representation because women were able to represent themselves rather than serve only as the subject. Although African Americans participated in the construction of the American Negro Exhibit, including important leaders such as W. E. B. DuBois (1868-1963) and Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), the exhibit was organized and produced largely by white Americans, and participation by women was limited to Johnston's involvement. Johnston's exhibition of women's photographs, on the other hand, was organized and curated entirely by a woman; the opening address to the exhibition was written and presented by a woman; and the photographs included were produced entirely by women.

Johnston's involvement at the Paris Exposition has been the focus of recent scholarship. Some historians, including Przyblyski and Rebecca Ruth Bergman, have analyzed Johnston's own photographs that were on display at the Exposition, which included over 500 images of Washington, D.C., school children for the American Education exhibit, in addition to her Hampton Institute images in the American Negro

⁴³⁰ Przyblyski, "American Visions at the Paris Exposition," 60.

exhibit.⁴³¹ Curator Verna Posever Curtis argues that Johnston's photographs at the Exposition were "the culmination of her activities during the previous decade." Curtis demonstrates that "in both her career and through the subjects she photographed, [Johnston] was riding the waves of what had gained currency as 'new' in American society: the 'New Woman,' the 'New Education,' the 'New Negro,' and the 'New School of American Photography.'"⁴³²

Regarding Johnston's exhibition of women's photography, Kathleen V. Jameson has attended to the variety of styles on display, arguing that the women photographers called upon the same artistic principles as their male contemporaries.⁴³³ Perhaps the most significant examination of Johnston's exhibition of women's photography, specifically, is the 2001-2002 exhibition, "Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901," curated by historian Bronwyn E. Griffith. The exhibition and its accompanying catalog recreated Johnston's original exhibition to underscore its historical significance. The essays collected in the catalog address a variety of topics, from the conservation of the photographs to a discussion of how the images were received by international audiences.⁴³⁴ A recurring theme that runs throughout Griffith's catalog is the

⁴³¹ Rebecca Ruth Bergman, "Visions of American Progress: The Photographs of Frances Benjamin Johnston at the Paris Exposition of 1900" (Master's thesis, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1997).

⁴³² Verna Posever Curtis, "Frances Benjamin Johnston in 1900: Staking the Sisterhood's Claim in American Photography," in *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901*, ed. Bronwyn A. E. Griffith (London: University Press of New England, 2001), 27. See also Bergman, "Visions of American Progress," 72-79.

⁴³³ Kathleen V. Jameson, "Society Matrons, Working Girls, Fair Maidens, and New Women: Frances Benjamin Johnston and the Construction of Gender" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2005).

⁴³⁴ Michel Poivert, "A Taste of the Avant-Garde: The Reception of American Women Photographers in Paris (1900-1901)," in *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901*, ed. Bronwyn A. E. Griffith (London: University Press of New England, 2001), 38-50. I agree with these statements, but also argue that the photography on view in Johnston's all-women exhibition, along with exhibiting American women's achievements

idea that the primary objective of Johnston's exhibition was to emphasize the successes of American women photographers at the turn of the century, and that Johnston's involvement assured that a model of the modern American New Woman was "represented as a symbol of progress" for the nation.⁴³⁵ As Griffith points out, the women involved in the exhibition were "examples of both social and photographic advancement: the accomplished techniques were proof of their photographic expertise and the fact that so many of them were professionals proof of the independent 'new woman'."⁴³⁶ In presenting the American New Woman to Parisian audiences, Griffith asserts, Johnston's exhibition participated in the Exposition's political agenda of promoting the notion of progress. What is missing from current scholarship is the consideration that Johnston's exhibition-organizing efforts abroad acted as part of an overall strategy on behalf of Johnston to use her personal resources and prominent position within the art world to promote the work of her American peers and encourage women's participation in the field of photography overall. In organizing the women's exhibition in Paris, Johnston was continuing the work she had been doing since the beginning of her career—working with other women to ensure their work was made visible to the public.

A Mentor Through the Press: Johnston's Published Essays

As Johnston's exhibition in Paris attested, women had achieved considerable success in photography by the late nineteenth century, and the fruitful careers of

in the field, also showed a more representative and careful portrayal of the life of the American woman than was on view elsewhere in the Exposition, particularly in the display of American painting found in the Grand Palais. See Frady, "Frances Benjamin Johnston," 58-61.

⁴³⁵ Griffith, *Ambassadors of Progress*, 22.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

photographers such as Ward, Käsebier, Ben-Yusuf, and others proved to be an encouragement to beginning photographers. Johnston in particular served as an influential mentor. It is evident even early in her career that introducing women to photography as a means of making a living was a main concern of Johnston's. In 1891, Johnston corresponded with George Eastman of the Kodak company regarding publishing an article on "Women Who Use Kodaks," though this project never manifested, despite Eastman's interest in the project.⁴³⁷ A couple of years later, however, Johnston spoke about women's opportunities in the field of photography with archaeologist and writer Clarence Bloomfield Moore (1852-1936), who published an 1893 article entitled "Women Experts in Photography" in *The Cosmopolitan*. Johnston opined, "It is another pet theory with me that there are great possibilities in photography as a profitable and pleasant occupation for women, and I feel that my success helps to demonstrate this, and it is for this reason that I am glad to have other women know of my work."⁴³⁸ By the late 1890s, Johnston took up the pen herself in an effort to publicize and promote women's work in photography. In 1896, Johnston proposed an article to the editors at *Harper's Bazar* on "photography as a profession for women." The editors replied that an article on that topic would be "very welcome to the *Bazar*" and agreed to review her article if she submitted one, though it appears that Johnston was too busy with her studio business at this moment to follow through with her proposal.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ Amy S. Doherty, "Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1864-1952," *History of Photography* vol. 4, no. 2 (April 1980): 98.

⁴³⁸ Moore, "Women Experts in Photography," 586. Moore also highlights the work of Catharine Weed Barnes Ward, Sarah Jane Eddy (1851-1945), and Emma J. Farnsworth (1860-1952), whose work was later featured in Johnston's exhibition at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

⁴³⁹ Letter from Harper & Brothers' Editorial Rooms to Frances Benjamin Johnston, April 14, 1896, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

“What a Woman Can Do with a Camera”

In 1897, Johnston finally wrote an article of her own for *The Ladies' Home Journal* that outlined the lucrative opportunities available to women in the field of photography (Fig. 104). Johnston began her essay, entitled “What a Woman Can Do with a Camera,” by addressing a broad audience—a smart strategy considering that in the late 1890s, *The Ladies' Home Journal* had the highest circulation of any other periodical of its kind.⁴⁴⁰ She directed her message to women who had trained in the traditional arts, but who had not yet found a way to turn that training into a profitable endeavor; women who had “dabbled a little in photography,” but wanted to turn it into a more serious occupation; and women who had tried to earn a living in other areas, such as stenography and bookkeeping, but found those outlets restrictive.⁴⁴¹ Thus, from the start, Johnston framed her essay so that it might appeal to a wide range of women, from trained artists and business professionals to hobbyists and homemakers, which is in itself a testament to the adaptability of photography as an artistic medium. This idea that anyone, no matter their background, could become a photographer eventually became a selling point for companies like Kodak.⁴⁴²

Johnston urged women to pick up the camera, claiming that “to an energetic, ambitious woman with even ordinary opportunities, success is always possible.”⁴⁴³ She followed this encouragement with an outline of practical advice for beginners in the field

⁴⁴⁰ By 1905, *The Ladies' Home Journal* reached a circulation of over one million readers, becoming the first magazine in the United States to do so. Hannum, “Frances Benjamin Johnston,” 28, note 4.

⁴⁴¹ Frances Benjamin Johnston, “What a Woman Can Do with a Camera,” *The Ladies' Home Journal* vol. 14, no. 10 (September 1897): 6-7.

⁴⁴² See West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*.

⁴⁴³ Johnston, “What a Woman Can do with a Camera,” 6.

that addressed such topics as “The Best Field for a Beginner,” “Necessary Apparatus for Photographic Work,” and “Arrangement and Management of a Portrait Studio.” Her tone is straightforward and though her essay is directed to a female audience, her discussion of photography as a business opportunity is not framed in gendered terms. The majority of her essay is dedicated to mechanical and sensible advice regarding the studio, the handling of the camera, and developing the prints. While other writers saw in women a disposition uniquely suited to the art, Johnston maintained that any woman with “good common sense, unlimited patience to carry her through endless failures, equally unlimited tact, good taste, a quick eye, a talent for detail, and a genius for hard work” would be able to make photography a profitable pursuit. For example, Bisland maintained that “photography makes a strong appeal to woman for the reason that she may study and practice it in her own home, in the very corner of her room; yet it does not interfere with daily duties and pleasure by demanding of its disciples long, tedious courses of study and hours of unremitting practice to gain mere facility in the use of the camera’s parts.”⁴⁴⁴ Johnston, however, paid no attention to how photography might or might not interfere with women’s presumed social roles as wives or mothers and their place within the home. Her essay considers aspiring women photographers as if they would be unheeded by these concerns—just as their male counterparts would be—and, unlike Bisland’s, very clearly stresses the importance the artistic training and the patience required to master the art.⁴⁴⁵

Building upon her previous assertion in Moore’s interview that “her success helps to demonstrate” that photography could be a “profitable and pleasant occupation for

⁴⁴⁴ Bisland, “Women and Their Cameras,” 38.

⁴⁴⁵ Johnston, “What a Woman Can do with a Camera,” 6. Johnston notes, “The training necessary to produce good work is, after all, probably the most difficult part of the problem of making photography pay.”

women,” Johnston included alongside her essay fourteen examples of her own portrait work.⁴⁴⁶ These included standard studio portraits of unidentified women (each simply labeled “Portrait”); portraits of elite women such as First Lady Frances Folsom Cleveland; and several photographs of costumed sitters made in the popular Pictorialist style of the time, each with allegorical titles such as *Innocence* and *Spring*.⁴⁴⁷ Johnston chose to include images that showcased a variety of portrait techniques and poses. Johnston’s sitters are pictured in pairs, in larger groups, and alone; they are posed standing and seated. Some face forward while others are situated at different angles to the camera; some are cropped at the bust, others at half-length, and still others at three-quartered view. The traditional portraits are devoid of any setting save for a studio background, while the Pictorialist images include foliage or carry attributes, such as a rosary. There is also variety in the age of her sitters; Johnston includes young children as well as more mature, older women. By showcasing such a broad array of portrait types, Johnston’s choice of illustrations is didactic, reinforcing her advice on the best ways to pose sitters: “Do not attempt to pose people or to strain your sitters into uncomfortable or awkward positions... Watch them, and help them into poses that are natural and graceful. Study their individuality.”⁴⁴⁸

Interestingly, none of the portraits Johnston included in her essay are of men, although at least half of her sitters were (sometimes very famous) male professionals, from established politicians and military leaders to well-known artists, like Howard Pyle and Joseph Pennell (1857-1926), and famous photographers, including Jacob Riis (1849-1914) and Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904). Her choice to focus specifically on portraits of

⁴⁴⁶ Moore, “Experts in Photography,” 586.

⁴⁴⁷ Some of these unlabeled portraits can be identified. The image labeled “Portrait” on page six depicts Rachel Cameron, daughter of Senator Donald Cameron, and was taken around 1896.

⁴⁴⁸ Johnston, “What a Woman Can Do with a Camera,” 7.

women shows that Johnston was using her platform in *The Ladies' Home Journal* to speak to her audience and their own position within the field, rather than attempting to further her own credentials. Johnston seems to have understood that, as beginners, her audience would begin by photographing those closest to them, such as family members, neighbors, and friends. In this case, images of business men in their offices would be not only unhelpful, but potentially intimidating and isolating to Johnston's readers. Aside from her portraits of Cleveland, the only obvious visual signifier of Johnston's professional success and status within the art world is the tiny photograph of her studio, tucked neatly next to her byline at the top of the essay, which again served as an example of the advice she gave based on her personal experience constructing a photography studio.

Readers highly anticipated Johnston's article, which was advertised by the magazine in several preceding issues. Once it was published, many women wrote to Johnston to express their admiration for her work. Marguerite Boudousquire of New Orleans wrote that she had "waited with impatience for [Johnston's] article." Boudousquire continued,

I was very happy to receive the last number of [the] journal, to see what [Johnston] had written about photography, as I have always had a desire of knowing something about it. I always imagined it a very difficult thing to do... I should be so glad if you would tell me what kind of camera to get, and about how much would a plain outfit cost. I am so anxious to make some money and have so little to begin with.⁴⁴⁹

Others asked for pointed, practical advice and/or sent Johnston examples of their own work for her to judge. Katharine Steward Stanbery, an acquaintance of Johnston's who lived in Zanesville, Ohio, wrote to Johnston: "I am writing to ask of you a great favor. It is to

⁴⁴⁹ Letter from Marguerite Boudousquire to Frances Benjamin Johnston, August 26, 1897, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

recommend to me the best handbook of photography and the best photographic journal for amateurs.” She then detailed her and her mother’s experiences with their own camera work, including the specifics about the cameras they used, and then noted, “I am going to be bold enough to send you a few specimens of our work from the Kodak films... Do you think that they are fair enough, after a few weeks practice, to warrant further efforts?”⁴⁵⁰ While contemporary critics and later scholars have written about women’s photography of this period in a way that assumes that women approached the field in a completely different way than their male colleagues, it is crucial to point out that the women themselves did not seek Johnston out for advice on how to cultivate a career while maintaining their roles as mothers and wives. They simply wanted to know *how* to become photographers.

“The Foremost Women Photographers in America”

A few years later, Johnston edited a series of seven photo-essays for *The Ladies’ Home Journal* that showcased the talents of eight of the country’s “foremost” women photographers: Käsebier, Mathilde Weil (1872-1918?), Frances Allen (1854-1941) and Mary Allen (1858-1941), Emma Farnsworth (1860-1952), Eva Lawrence Watson (1867-1935), Ben-Yusuf, and Elizabeth Brownell.⁴⁵¹ Described alternatively by the magazine as a “a series of beautiful photographs” and a “series of picture-pages showing what American women have done with the camera,” each one-page article consisted of a brief description

⁴⁵⁰ Letter from Katharine Steward Stanbery to Frances Benjamin Johnston, September 9, 1897, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁵¹ Frances Benjamin Johnston, “The Foremost Women Photographers in America,” series printed in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 6-9, 11-12, and vol. 19, no. 2 (May-August, October-November 1901, and January 1902): various page numbers.

of the artist and her work, four to five samples of their work, and a portrait of the artist (Figs. 105-111).⁴⁵²

As art historian Gillian Greenhill Hannum has argued, this series serves as an example of how Johnston “consciously decided to play the role of mentor for other women photographers” by using her influence to promote the careers of her colleagues in the popular press.⁴⁵³ According to Hannum, Johnston’s series provides a “vital perspective on how America’s leading female photographers were seen in their own day,” but I would also argue that it offers even more insight into Johnston’s role as a promoter and curator of women’s photography.⁴⁵⁴ Each of the photographers that Johnston profiled in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* series, with the exception of Brownell, were also featured in her exhibition of American women’s photography at the 1900 Paris Exposition.⁴⁵⁵ From the outset of organizing that exhibition, Johnston had anticipated the subject would be of interest to publishers and had assured the artists that she would “employ [her] best efforts to protect [their] interests” if they were willing to have their work published, “at [her] discretion.”⁴⁵⁶ Thus, in the fall of 1900 after the Paris Exposition had ended and Johnston’s exhibition

⁴⁵² Frances Benjamin Johnston, “The Foremost Women Photographers in America: First: The Work of Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier,” *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 6 (May 1901): 1; Frances Benjamin Johnston, “The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Sixth Article: Zaida Ben-Yusuf,” *The Ladies Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 12 (November 1901): 13. Though it appears that Johnston initially proposed the idea, the exact format of the series was specified by the magazine. Hannum, “Frances Benjamin Johnston,” 26.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 27. Hannum’s article is brief and her analysis of the series is limited. While helpful in providing the context in which Johnston edited her series—including correspondence between Johnston and her editor, for instance—Hannum neglects to consider the literary and visual content of the essays themselves.

⁴⁵⁵ Johnston’s collection of art photography includes several images by Brownell dated to around 1900, including the five images that were reproduced in the photo-essay. It may be that Brownell’s photographs arrived too late for Johnston to include them in the Paris exhibition, though no correspondence from Brownell exists in Johnston’s papers from this period. See Meister, “Women Photographers in the Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection,” 146-147.

⁴⁵⁶ Letter from Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1900, reel 20, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

was on its way to St. Petersburg for further international exposure, Johnston approached the editors at *The Ladies' Home Journal* with her proposal for a photo-series.

The series presented a range of approaches to photography, from Käsebier's pictorialist "portrayals of the tender grace of Motherhood" to the Allen sisters' illustrations of "child and village life" and "histories of Colonial manners and customs."⁴⁵⁷ The artists themselves were also varied in their professional backgrounds. Käsebier and Ben-Yusuf were well-established with their own studios in New York; Watson and Weil each maintained successful studios in Philadelphia, with a focus on Pictorialism and portraiture, respectively; the Allen sisters operated their studio in Deerfield, Massachusetts; Brownell, based in Chicago, and Farnsworth, who worked in Albany, both produced photography for illustrated books. In her choice to showcase a range of photographers, Johnston reiterated the motivation of her earlier 1897 essay: proving what women could achieve as photographers by presenting a range of women's expertise in the field.

Ultimately, though, practical concerns and personal interests also motivated Johnston's choice of which photographers to include in the series. It appears that she generally selected from the photographers who sent her the most samples of their work for the Paris exhibition. Weil had offered Johnston ten samples to choose from, for instance, while those photographs that supplied only three or four images were generally not considered for the series. Johnston also relied on the depth of her knowledge of the women's backgrounds and careers. So, even though Frances and Mary Allen submitted only four photographs for the Paris exhibition, the Allens had been corresponding with

⁴⁵⁷ Johnston, "First: The Work of Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier," 1; Frances Benjamin Johnston, "The Foremost Women Photographers in America: Third Article: Frances and Mary Allen," *The Ladies' Home Journal* vol. 18, no. 8 (July 1901): 13.

Johnston since as early as 1897, so Johnston had a more complete understanding of their careers with which to compose a short essay for the magazine. Lastly, Johnston was also no doubt concerned with promoting the careers of those closest to her. The persistence with which Johnston compelled Käsebier to submit samples of her work for the Paris exhibition, despite Käsebier's initial hesitation, suggests a deep investment in her colleagues' success which would no doubt compel Johnston to also want to include Käsebier in her photo-series.⁴⁵⁸

Though scholars have highlighted Johnston as an exemplary mentor and role model for American women photographers, Johnston's promotion of her colleagues in the popular press was by no means an anomaly. She was participating in a larger trend in which women who had found success in photography made it a priority to give support to other women in their field through editorials in both popular magazines and photography journals. Catharine Weed Barnes Ward and Elizabeth Flint Wade (1849-1915) are two of many artists who encouraged other women photographers through the press. Ward publically "made it her duty to help women gain greater access to photography and its institutions" by speaking at women's organizations and camera clubs in the United States and Great Britain, and regularly publishing essays in various photography journals, including *American Amateur Photographer*, *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin*, and *Wilson's Photographic Magazine*.⁴⁵⁹ Wade, an author, poet, and Pictorialist photographer, wrote for

⁴⁵⁸ According to historian Barbara L. Michaels, Johnston "consider[ed] Käsebier's contribution to be essential" and refused to "take no for an answer." Reportedly, Johnston visited Käsebier in her studio and, "resorting to tears in a melodramatic scene, even tried to buy a print that Käsebier had just sold to a client." Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier*, 63.

⁴⁵⁹ In her lectures and writing, Ward often emphasized the benefits of photography as a business opportunity that outweighed other work options available to women, while also providing the kinds of practical advice needed to achieve that level of economic success. Denny, "Catharine Weed Barnes Ward," 157. See also Gover, *The Positive Image*, 44-45.

The Photographic Times, and also shared her personal experiences as a photographer in a series published by *The Photo-American* entitled, “Amateur Photography Through Women’s Eyes.”⁴⁶⁰ Wade wrote that “what was begun as a diversion has now become a vocation, and my camera is a source of income as well as a source of pleasure and recreation... I believe there is no other vocation open to women in which so much pleasure and profit is combined with so little drudgery.”⁴⁶¹ This kind of public encouragement from professional women photographers was perhaps the most significant advice that women across the country received. More importantly, publications like those by Johnston, Ward, and Wade initiated a public conversation that continued through private correspondence between the authors and their readers, creating an extensive community of women photographers that spread across the nation.

A Mentor Through Letters: Johnston’s Correspondence

Many women from across the country wrote to Johnston for advice on practical aspects of photography, such as her recommendations for specific cameras or reference guides, and sometimes sent Johnston their work in hopes that she could offer constructive criticism.⁴⁶² Others wrote regarding their careers and ambitions, often revealing their

⁴⁶⁰ Elizabeth Flint Wade, “The Camera as a Source of Income Outside the Studio,” *Photographic Times* vol. 24 (June 8, 1894): 358, and idem, “Amateur Photography Through Women’s Eyes,” *The Photo-American* vol. 15 (June 1894): 235-239.

⁴⁶¹ Wade, “Amateur Photography Through Women’s Eyes,” 235.

⁴⁶² For example, Katherine Steward Stanbery, an acquaintance of Johnston’s from Zanesville, Ohio, wrote: “I am writing to ask of you a great favor. It is to recommend to me the best handbook of photography and the best photographic journal for amateurs.” She continued, detailing her and her mother’s experiences with their own camera work, and then noted, “I am going to be bold enough to send you a few specimens of our work from the Kodak films... Do you think that they are fair enough, after a few weeks practice, to warrant further efforts?” Letter from Katherine Steward Stanbery to Frances Benjamin Johnston, September 9, 1897, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

concerns about balancing their photographic work with their duties as mothers and wives. Virginia G. Sharp, an amateur photographer based in Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, confessed to Johnston how “the care of a family of children had put a stop to all art work,” but how she later found photography to be an easier, more compatible way to “satisfy the longing [she] had to do something in the art line” while still maintaining her role as mother.⁴⁶³ Letters such as these reveal much about the state of photography for women, in addition to showing how Johnston’s reputation had spread and how her work influenced amateur and professional photographers around the country.

While some women wrote to Johnston to ask for advice or to simply share their own personal experiences, others sent Johnston specific requests for employment or instruction, hoping that in exchange for their work as her assistant, they would be better able to learn the art and business of photography. After visiting Johnston’s studio in 1894, Emily G. Mew (b. 1863) sent a note to Johnston in which she asserted that she “want[ed] very much to learn photography, or at least, to find out if I have any talent for it.”⁴⁶⁴ She then asked if Johnston would take her on as a pupil or assistant. Although it is unknown whether Johnston took Mew up on her offer, correspondence shows that she did invite Mew to at least one “at home” she held in March the next year, where she hosted several members of the Capital Camera Club.⁴⁶⁵ Frances L. Barber of Chicago wrote to Johnston in August of 1896 with a similar request. She said, “I am interested in photography and

⁴⁶³ Letter from Virginia G. Sharp to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 13, 1900, reel 20, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁶⁴ Letter from Emily Mew to Frances Benjamin Johnston, November 12, 1894, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁶⁵ Letter from Emily Mew to Frances Benjamin Johnston, March 6, 1895, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Either way, Johnston must have recognized Mew’s talent, as she included one of her photographs in her exhibition of women’s photography in Paris in 1901.

knowing your reputation in that [field] write to ask your advice as to my taking up the study, which I am quite anxious to do.” Like Mew before her, Barber had heard through word-of-mouth that Johnston might need assistance in her new studio and offered to take on the position of “pupil or apprentice and as an assistant in some ways.” After stating her qualifications, goals, and family ties to Washington, D.C., Barber wrote, “It would be the greatest advantage for me to study under you and I hope you can consider taking me in whichever way would be best for you.”⁴⁶⁶

Johnston’s Participation in Photography Organizations and Women’s Clubs

Photography clubs were another way that women sought to promote their work and find encouragement and advice from others in their field. These clubs served as places where women could meet and openly discuss their work with other professionals and amateurs. Johnston was very active in the club circle, participating in both women’s clubs and amateur and professional photographers’ associations. Johnston was a founding member of the Business Woman’s Club of Washington, the first organization of its kind “in the whole world” to be dedicated to business women in all professions, and she exhibited her photographs of the World’s Columbian Exposition at the Club’s inaugural reception.⁴⁶⁷ As scholar Maria Ausherman has noted, Johnston helped to organize the

⁴⁶⁶ Letter from Frances L. Barber to Frances Benjamin Johnston, August 5, 1896, reel 4, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁶⁷ “The Business Woman’s Club,” *The Pathfinder*, January 20, 1894, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. The goal of the Business Woman’s Club was “to furnish a down-town meeting place for the members, particularly in the middle of the day, where they can drop in for tea and discuss matters and things in general on neutral ground” in order to “bring business women together, to afford relaxation to tired brains and hands.” “Only Club of its Kind,” *The Washington Post*, January 20, 1894, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers; Unidentified clipping, *The Capital*, January 27, 1894, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

Business Woman's Club in order to further advance women's efforts in the field of photography, "to make contacts, publicize her work, and inspire other women photographers to work together to advance their careers."⁴⁶⁸ Johnston was also the first woman member to be admitted to the Washington Camera Club (Fig. 112), and, in 1892, she was elected Second Vice President to the National Council of the newly-formed American League of Amateur Photographers, which was established to "bring about a closer union between camera societies, to promote the science and art of photography, to encourage and advance photography separate from its trade, commercial, or professional relations, and to bring members into closer relationship in acquiring useful information."⁴⁶⁹

Frances Benjamin Johnston and Gertrude Käsebier: A Professional Friendship

Johnston and Käsebier were two of the most prominent photographers of their day and they enjoyed a professional relationship and friendship, despite the twelve-year age difference between them. In addition to the support the two women gave each other as friends and colleagues, they both also worked passionately to recruit and support other women photographers. They served together as part of the Salon Jury for the Second Philadelphia Photographic Salon in 1899, along with Clarence H. White (1871-1925), Henry Troth (1859-1945), and F. Holland Day. The Philadelphia Photographic Salons were one of the most prestigious photography exhibitions in the country at the time and one in which many women photographers were represented.

⁴⁶⁸ Ausherman, *The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston*, 36.

⁴⁶⁹ "League of Amateur Photographers," *The Evening Star*, July 22, 1892, 4; "Photographers Get Together," unidentified clipping, c. July 1892, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

Johnston and Käsebier began corresponding in 1892, when they were both at the onset of their careers. The earliest letter from Käsebier found in Johnston's papers, dated November 7, 1892, suggests that correspondence between the two women must have started even earlier. In it, Käsebier thanked Johnston for a "paper" she had written, noting that she would "enjoy reading it some day [sic]."⁴⁷⁰ She also asked Johnston to return "reviews" that she had lent to her, apparently for the purpose of preparing said paper. Their many letters, both professional and personal in nature, reveal the benefits of having an intimate support network as a professional working woman. In some, Käsebier asked for advice while in others, she offered Johnston her support. In a letter from around 1901, Käsebier wrote: "My dear Miss Johnston, I've a great scheme in this head of mine... Can you tell me how I can get some introductions to our foreign ambassadors? ... I have some other valuable connections but must be credited officially."⁴⁷¹ Käsebier understood that Johnston had by this time made valuable connections within the elite and political circles of Washington, D.C., and sought Johnston's advice on how to do something similar abroad. In a later letter from 1903, Käsebier offered her friend respite from her hectic work schedule, writing "I have a cottage at Newport, just out of town. If you need rest come to me. You will be most heartily welcome. I cannot but think that good would come if we were to see each other more."⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Letter from Gertrude Käsebier to Frances Benjamin Johnston, November 7, 1892, reel 3, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁷¹ Letter from Gertrude Käsebier to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 6, 1901, reel 6, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Reprinted in part in Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 77, and Doherty, "Frances Benjamin Johnston," 107.

⁴⁷² Letter from Gertrude Käsebier to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 6, 1903, reel 6, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Reprinted in part in Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 77, and Gover, *The Positive Image*, 60.

In her biography on Käsebier, historian Barbara L. Michaels notes that Johnston and Käsebier had “limited contact,” and that except for occasional professional encounters, the two women seldom corresponded or met until 1905, when Johnston opened a New York branch of her studio.⁴⁷³ Michaels’ assessment understates (and incorrectly describes) their relationship and its importance to each of them.⁴⁷⁴ The two women’s assessment of one another in their published work and personal letters—in 1903, for example, Käsebier described their relationship as one between “two women with a common interest”—in addition to their repeated personal and professional interactions, provide a different reading of their relationship.⁴⁷⁵

The two photographers also travelled to Europe together during the summer of 1905, enjoying both work and leisure time abroad. Gover writes that an “apparently companionable working relationship evolved” during their trip, which included visits to England, Italy, Switzerland, and France (Fig. 113).⁴⁷⁶ While in England, the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain invited them to use their darkrooms and other facilities during their stay. In Venice, the celebrity and fashion photographer Baron Adolph de Meyer (1868-1946) acted as their host. They also took meetings with important photographers, including the Pictorialist photographer Robert Demachy (1859-1936), whose estate they visited while touring in France. As Gover has noted, “companionship and photography were integrated into the trip.”⁴⁷⁷ While abroad, Käsebier convinced

⁴⁷³ Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier*, 97-98.

⁴⁷⁴ For instance, Michaels states that Johnston’s and Käsebier’s relationship began when they served together as jurors at the Philadelphia Salon in 1899, but there are letters from Käsebier to Johnston that date as early as 1892 in the Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁷⁵ Letter from Gertrude Käsebier to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 6, 1903, reel 6, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁷⁶ Gover, *The Positive Image*, 60.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

Johnston to act as her subject and, back at home, Johnston made Käsebier a common feature in her writing (Figs. 114-115).

In addition to featuring her essay in *The Ladies' Home Journal* series, Johnston wrote an article about Käsebier in 1903 for *Camera Work* that praised her in the highest of terms, remarking that although Käsebier had been deemed “the best portrait-photographer in the world,” she did not believe that characterization went far enough.⁴⁷⁸ Expanding upon her previous article in which she highlighted Käsebier’s unique talents, Johnston went further in *Camera Work* to emphasize Käsebier’s incredible “influence on other workers and on public opinion as well.”⁴⁷⁹ Johnston viewed Käsebier as a key player in what she saw as a “new movement” in professional photography, a “revolution” amongst portrait photographers that involved “breaking away from hide-bound tradition” that depended upon stilted poses and artificial props.⁴⁸⁰ What Johnston appears to have admired most about Käsebier’s work was that she “never fail[ed] to place the stamp of her own individuality upon even the most commonplace and uninteresting of her sitters.”⁴⁸¹ For Johnston, who from her first experiments with the camera insisted upon “art in photography,” the presence of the artist was crucial to successful photography.

Written at a time when Johnston was breaking away from portraiture in favor of a working exclusively in the more straight-forward, documentary-style approach she utilized in her early published work, it appears that Käsebier’s style had also influenced Johnston, at least in some respects. Michaels has suggested that Johnston was influenced by Käsebier

⁴⁷⁸ Frances Benjamin Johnston, “Gertrude Käsebier, Professional Photographer,” *Camera Work* vol. 1 (1903): 20.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

to “take more than a hundred pictures of classes and various activities at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School,” a project Johnston undertook from 1901-1903.⁴⁸² However, the resulting photographs differed greatly from Käsebier’s images of Native Americans that she carefully posed in her studio.

A Business Partnership as a Strategy of Sisterhood: Frances Benjamin Johnston and Mattie Edwards Hewitt

Johnston became a mentor to Mattie Edwards Hewitt (1869-1956), a close friend of Johnston’s from St. Louis who sought her advice in letters and ultimately became her business partner (Fig. 116). It is unclear when Johnston first met Hewitt, but correspondence between the two women began as early as 1901.⁴⁸³ A reference to meeting in Buffalo in an undated letter from Hewitt to Johnston suggests that the two women may have been introduced at the Pan American Exposition, where Johnston was the Fair’s official photographer and Hewitt was presumably assisting her photographer husband, Arthur Hewitt.⁴⁸⁴ In 1909, Johnston moved to New York and established a studio there where she turned her focus to architectural photography. Hewitt, recently divorced from her husband, left St. Louis to follow Johnston to New York that summer. There, she lived with Johnston and worked as an assistant in her studio, helping with darkroom procedures and doing enlargements. In 1913, Johnston and Hewitt officially became business partners through an “oral agreement,” specializing in architectural and garden

⁴⁸² Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier*, 63.

⁴⁸³ Much of the correspondence between Johnston and Hewitt is undated, which makes it difficult to parse a true timeline of their relationship. See reel 18, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁸⁴ Letter from Mattie Edwards Hewitt to Frances Benjamin Johnston, undated. Reprinted in part in Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 82.

photography.⁴⁸⁵ The Johnston-Hewitt studio proved to be a successful venture for both women. Together, Johnston and Hewitt were commissioned by architects and homeowners to photograph both established and newly-constructed buildings around the city, including the interior of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the New York Public Library at Forty-Second Street, the Manhattan Hotel, and many private homes, to name just a few of their commissions. They also produced hand-colored lantern slide shows of private gardens and provided photography for illustrated articles in popular magazines, sometimes straying far from the architectural and garden photographs that their business was known for (Fig. 117).⁴⁸⁶

Popular magazines, newspapers, and photography journals published feature articles on Johnston and Hewitt, which are helpful in determining the nature of their professional and personal relationship. When asked about Hewitt's role in their business for a 1912 article in *Vanity Fair*, Johnston stated that she "wanted to specialize and Mrs. Hewitt wanted to help," elaborating that Hewitt was responsible for "develop[ing] and enlarge[ing] the pictures."⁴⁸⁷ The accompanying illustrations reinforced these two roles (Fig. 118). However, other quotes throughout the article hint at a more egalitarian partnership between Johnston and Hewitt, one where both women worked together to solve

⁴⁸⁵ Johnston's and Hewitt's professional relationship and friendship ended abruptly in March 1917, though the reasons for this are unclear. Hewitt paid Johnston \$500 to keep the studio so that she could continue to run the business, choosing to maintain their specialty in garden and estate photography. Their "breakup" appears to have been contentious because Johnston evidently went through her personal collection of articles and news clippings and marked through Hewitt's name in their shared bylines. Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 87-88.

⁴⁸⁶ See, for instance, Johnston's and Hewitt's photographs in Alys E. Bentley, "Some Higher Aspects of the Modern Dance Movement," *Vanity Fair* vol. 2, no. 2 (April 1914): 18-21, and "Isadora Duncan's Art," *Literary Digest* (May 1, 1915): 1018-1021.

⁴⁸⁷ Miss Impertinence, "They Photograph the Smart Set," *Vanity Fair* vol. 49 (December 14, 1912): 18.

the various creative problems that came with working in dimly-lit interiors and photographing architectural decorations from great heights. Johnston explained,

“We delight in difficult assignments—a new difficulty usually means a discovery of a new way to overcome it. For instance, when we photographed the New Theatre, we had to take the photographs before the theatre was in use; consequently, there were some dark corners that were almost impossible to take. We tried using the spot light for this work, in connection with day light, and got the very best possible results. Since then we have used it wherever possible, and never both with flashlight.”⁴⁸⁸

Johnston’s use of the collective “we” supports a reading of the women’s relationship as more of an egalitarian professional partnership than that between a professional and her assistant. A year later, Johnston and Hewitt were featured in *The New York Times* in an article on local women photographers that promoted their venture as an equal partnership. “Together,” the reporter explained, “they have photographed some of the most beautiful homes in New York, and they enter into contract work for picturing public buildings with the same confidence that men do.”⁴⁸⁹ In *Wilson’s Photographic Magazine*, journalist Eva Vom Baur (1889-1978) further elaborated on the photographers’ working practices. She noted, “Miss Johnston and Mrs. Hewitt do all their own operating, and personally supervise every detail of the printing and finishing... Entirely outgrowing their first venture, ‘the firm’ moved some two years ago to their present quarters at 628 Fifth Avenue, and now employ a ‘force’ of one, as printer and dark room man.”⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸⁹ “Matters of Interest to Women: The Camera Has Opened a New Profession for Women—Some of Those Who Have Made Good,” *The New York Times*, April 20, 1913, 12, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁹⁰ Eva Vom Baur, “Frances Benjamin Johnston and Mattie Edwards Hewitt,” *Wilson’s Photographic Magazine* vol. 50, no. 6 (June 1913): 244. A detailed description of the studio as well as a floorplan accompany the article. This location on Fifth Avenue was likely a deliberate choice, as the area was a hub of photographic activity. Many of Johnston’s colleagues, among them Käsebier, Ben-Yusuf, Stieglitz, and Jessie Tarbox Beals (1870-1942) had their studios or galleries nearby. Ausherman, *The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston*, 95.

Presumably, the hiring of a darkroom assistant allowed Hewitt more freedom to expand her role as a photographer in their shared venture.

This image of an equal partnership was furthered in their business materials. For instance, a publicity flyer for the studio read, “Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston, Mrs. Mattie Edwards Hewitt, Specialists in Color Photography” (Fig. 119). Similarly, in an undated photograph of what appears to be a temporary booth set up for an exhibition or fair, a banner hangs across the entrance that reads, “Frances Benjamin Johnston, Mattie Edwards Hewitt, Official Photographers” (Fig. 120). In both instances, the women share the same professional title, repudiating any difference in their roles despite the implicit hierarchy that occurs when one name—in this case, Johnston’s—is listed above the other.⁴⁹¹ In the latter image, both women’s honorifics (Miss and Mrs., respectively) have disappeared. In removing any reference to their marital status, or to outside relationships more generally, Johnston and Hewitt effectively presented themselves to the public as a pair.

Some scholars have interpreted the two photographers’ personal correspondence as evidence that their relationship was romantically intimate as well as professional. Berch, for instance, examines Hewitt’s letters to show that they “go the full range, from classic feminist solidarity... to boldly sensual allusions to shared cigarettes and pillows.”⁴⁹² According to Berch, “Johnston is painted as the unattainable beloved, while Hewitt casts herself as the worthless supplicant.”⁴⁹³ Berch also cites a “suggestive portrait” published alongside the aforementioned article in *The New York Times* as evidence that the two

⁴⁹¹ Publicity flyer, c. 1913, reel 33, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

⁴⁹² Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 83.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

women appeared publicly as “very much a couple” (Fig. 121).⁴⁹⁴ Whatever the nature of their relationship, it does not seem to have been considered inappropriate by Americans at the time. That the two women shared a home-and-studio space was also public knowledge; an unnamed reporter for *The New York Times* wrote that they “intercepted” the two women at “their studio,” where “they were going to develop [thirty plates] that night.”⁴⁹⁵ Johnston’s mother enthusiastically supported Johnston’s and Hewitt’s partnership, noting in one letter addressed to both women that, “When two girls have faced the Babel of NY for two years, have conquered so many obstacles, and gotten so far on the road to success, I’m ready to back them against any odds.”⁴⁹⁶

Nevertheless, their personal letters complicate the image of an egalitarian business relationship that was promoted publicly. For instance, as Berch has observed, Hewitt often addressed her letters to “Dear Old Boss,” and referred to herself as “Matey,” which Berch reads as “a play on ‘Mattie’ and ‘mate,’ meaning worker, and perhaps, partner?”⁴⁹⁷ Berch also points out that in her letters, Hewitt sometimes referred to Johnston as “the Boss-Lady” and to herself as “the assistant,” which Berch understands as a “psychological ploy to make Hewitt seem less in charge, even though she was older.”⁴⁹⁸ This dynamic may have been the reality of their business partnership at first, as Hewitt had been her husband’s dark room assistant in St. Louis and continued that work for Johnston in New York. However, Hewitt took up the camera herself soon after moving to New York—she noted

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 157-186, note 33.

⁴⁹⁵ “Matters of Interest to Women,” 12.

⁴⁹⁶ Letter from Frances Antoinette Benjamin Johnston to Frances Benjamin Johnston and Mattie Edwards Hewitt, July 26, 1911, reel 3, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers. Reprinted in Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 86.

⁴⁹⁷ Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 83-84.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

in 1914 that she “began [photography] because [she] had to make [her] living”⁴⁹⁹—and as their business flyer, photograph bylines, and contemporary articles show, Johnston and Hewitt shared equal responsibilities for their business.⁵⁰⁰

Although many scholars have discussed Johnston’s role in supporting other women photographers, there has been little acknowledgment of how *Johnston* benefitted from the support of other women in the field, or of any collaborative efforts that she undertook with other women photographers and artists. For example, Hannum argues that “not only did Johnston move swiftly to carve out her own niche as a respected professional photographer with connections in high places, but she also seems to have consciously decided to play the role of mentor for other women photographers.”⁵⁰¹ Likewise, in discussing the Johnston-Hewitt partnership, specifically, Amy S. Doherty has argued that Hewitt “obviously learned from Frances, for, according to an article about Mrs. Hewitt’s photographic work, ‘[Hewitt] was dispatched on her career in garden and interior photography by a friend, a woman architectural photographer’.”⁵⁰² Doherty’s argument suggests that Hewitt was the lone beneficiary of the partnership. However, after their shared business venture ended, Johnston and Hewitt continued to photograph interior and exterior architecture and gardens separately, the latter of which was a subject Johnston only took up after partnering with Hewitt, who had experience photographing the outdoors from her earlier career in St. Louis.⁵⁰³ As Ausherman has observed, Johnston “clearly had benefited from her

⁴⁹⁹ “Matters of Interest to Women,” 12.

⁵⁰⁰ Their bylines often read “Copyright Johnston-Hewitt Studio,” “Photos by Frances Benjamin Johnston and Mattie Edwards Hewitt,” or “Photograph by Miss Johnston-Mrs. Hewitt, New York.”

⁵⁰¹ Hannum, “Frances Benjamin Johnston,” 23.

⁵⁰² Doherty, “Frances Benjamin Johnston,” 108.

⁵⁰³ “Matters of Interest to Women,” 12.

association with Hewitt in their mutual exploration of garden and estate photography. Much of Johnston's knowledge about horticulture and the history and folklore of gardens dates to the period of their partnership."⁵⁰⁴ Analyses like Hannum's and Doherty's lead readers to assume that Johnston worked alone when in fact she was just as dependent on the support, encouragement, and professional connections with other women photographers as they were on her.

There are other examples of women working with other women as studio partners, and of older women photographers taking younger women into their studio as assistants—and this trend spreads across media, as I have shown in Chapters One and Two. Käsebier employed Harriet Hibbard as her studio assistant for over five years, and Hewitt hired Nanette Tarbox Beals, daughter of the well-known photographer Jessie Tarbox Beals, as her assistant in New York after Johnston left their business, to name just two examples (Fig. 122).⁵⁰⁵ Although most professional photographers employed studio assistants, little research has been done on the nature of their relationships. It is clear, however, that these relationships provided both practical and emotional support, especially for women artists who often had to balance work and home life.

In 1905, one writer remarked that Johnston had “made a success by departing from the beaten path and following her own artistic instincts.”⁵⁰⁶ Ultimately, Johnston's involvement in curating the all-women's photography exhibition at the 1900 Paris Exposition; her constant encouragement of women photographers in the popular press; and

⁵⁰⁴ Ausherman, *The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston*, 97.

⁵⁰⁵ Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 80.

⁵⁰⁶ “A Famous Photographer,” *Young People's Weekly*, January 21, 1905, reel 29, Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers.

her friendships and professional relationships are examples of how Johnston used her considerable influence in the art world to promote the idea of the New Woman in the field of photography both at home and abroad. The Paris Exposition gave Johnston an international stage, which she used to show the world the contributions that American women had made to photography as amateur, professional, and artistic photographers. Johnston stressed to eager audiences in Paris and in the United States that women were able to make considerable strides as professionals in the field of photography—and the photographs on view at the Exposition, not to mention the successful careers of the women involved, were visible proof of her statements.

After ending her business partnership with Hewitt, Johnston eventually relocated to New Orleans to continue her career as an architectural photographer, a pursuit she continued until her death in 1952. Though Johnston was not alone in pursuing joint entrepreneurial endeavors, her success as a business woman did have other repercussions. Johnston, Hewitt, and other women artists like them helped to establish a socially respectable and appropriate entrepreneurial paradigm for women. In New Orleans, Johnston would find one of the most successful examples of this type of cooperative, organized womanhood: the Newcomb College Pottery.

CONCLUSION

“The historical sisterhood, it seems to me, can teach us a great deal about putting women first, whether as friends, lovers, or political allies.”
– Estelle Freedman⁵⁰⁷

Art students at H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College began the production of pottery on a for-profit basis in 1895, when a kiln was built in the basement of the College’s main campus building. Known as the Newcomb College Pottery, this entrepreneurial program was intended for students who had completed their courses of study in the art department at the all-women’s Newcomb College. The Pottery operated with goals of providing students with extended instruction in the decorative arts while enabling them to earn an income through the sale of their pottery, jewelry, textiles, and other crafts. Ellsworth Woodward (1861-1939), the director of the art department, described the Pottery as “somewhat outside the usual methods of school work... It is rather like a professional course for which the pupil fits herself by previous study... a business in which theoretical study finds its practical application in concrete results.”⁵⁰⁸

Under the direction of faculty member Mary Givens Sheerer (1865-1954), the Pottery operated as a production line (Figs.123-124). First, a Newcomb student would conceive of a design for a pot or other type of ceramic ware; a master potter would then

⁵⁰⁷ Freedman, “Separatism as Strategy,” 525.

⁵⁰⁸ Woodward viewed the Pottery as providing much-needed career options for women by “widen[ing] the opportunities for the art student of New Orleans whose field, after a course of study, is now practically limited to teaching.” Ellsworth Woodward, “An Experiment with Applied Art in Newcomb College, New Orleans,” *Art Education* vol. 5 (May 1898): 167-168.

throw and trim the students' wares according to their stipulations. Then, students applied their original designs to their objects before they were fired, a process that was overseen by a kiln master. In terms of design, Sheerer decided "that the decorator should be given full rein to [her] fancy... and that no special style should be followed, but rather each should follow [their] own style, making the decoration in this way more spontaneous—less conventional."⁵⁰⁹ As a policy, each decorator marked the base of every work with their own "decorator's mark," and no two pieces of Newcomb pottery were alike.

The art produced in the Newcomb Pottery, which blended Arts and Crafts influences with motifs and natural elements that directly referenced their Southern landscape, quickly became popular amongst New Orleans residents and its high-demand eventually spread to the rest of the country (Figs. 125-126). Newcomb Pottery products were exhibited and sold widely around the country and the Pottery won awards at several World's Fairs. Critics, artists, and museum professionals lauded both the Pottery's organizing mission and its artistic style.⁵¹⁰ In New Orleans, one reporter noted the pottery's popularity and the success of Pottery in fulfilling Woodward and Sheerer's original goals: "The students who fashion these beautiful pieces of art have in many instances taken up

⁵⁰⁹ Mary G. Sheerer, "Newcomb Pottery," *Keramic Studio* vol. 1, no. 7 (November 1899): 151.

⁵¹⁰ For example, in 1899, the pottery received the attention of Edward S. Morse (1838-1925), curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He wrote, "I must express my admiration for the very beautiful essays in your oven... in your work we have forms and glazes which must appeal to the critical eye even of the old potters of Japan." Also in that year, Arthur Wesley Dow (1857-1922), painter and art educator at New York's Pratt Institute, remarked in a letter to Woodward that "all who have at heart the development of art industries, who recognize the value of beauty in its relation to every day [sic] life, will be interested in the Newcomb pottery. It is a serious effort in the direction of uniting art and handicraft. The examples I have seen were beautiful in form and color, simple in design, and of excellent workmanship." Letter from Edward S. Morse to Ellsworth Woodward, July 15, 1899, and Letter from Arthur Wesley Dow to Ellsworth Woodward, November 15, 1899, Folder 4, Box 1, Ellsworth Woodward Papers, 1905-1939, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana (hereafter cited as "Ellsworth Woodward Papers").

pottery as a life work and whenever they receive orders, as they are constantly doing, the Newcomb Pottery and kiln are open to all who can handle the work properly. Thus has been opened a new source of livelihood to many.”⁵¹¹

The Pottery benefitted Newcomb students in multiple ways. The decorators were allowed autonomy over their designs and their work schedules, and some chose to become full-time professional decorators. Their salaries helped cover the costs of their tuition and living expenses, and the College provided its craftsmen with regular exhibition space for marketing their wares (Fig. 127). The decorators also had their own professional organization at their disposal, the Art Alumnae Association, which maintained a permanent salesroom and hosted regular exhibitions of their newest work. In the Pottery, women artists found a supportive community that forwarded their educations and their careers while also providing lasting and meaningful friendships and professional relationships. Harriet Coulter Joor (1875-1965), a member of Newcomb’s first class in pottery decoration in the fall of 1895, emphasized the feelings of familial sentiment amongst the students and faculty at Newcomb. She recalled, “We were so like a little family group, the few of us working at our tables with Mr. [Joseph] Meyer thumping out his vases at the wheel beside us, and the big round kiln looming up in the other corner of the room, with the splashed glazing table beside it! I loved it so I used to linger on and on, forgetting everything but the jar under my hand...”⁵¹² Joor’s career is one of many of the Pottery’s success stories. After working for the Pottery for several years, Joor moved to Chicago where she taught

⁵¹¹ Unidentified clipping, Newcomb Scrapbook, University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. Reprinted in Jessie Poesch, et. al., *Newcomb Pottery: An Enterprise for Southern Women, 1895-1940* (Exton, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Limited, 1984), 25.

⁵¹² Letter from Harriet Coulter Joor to the Delgado Museum of Art Project, no date. Reprinted in Suzanne Ormond and Mary E. Irvine, *Louisiana’s Art Nouveau: The Crafts of the Newcomb Style* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 1976), 158.

classes at the University of Chicago, directed an art pottery, and published short stories and essays on design for *The Craftsman*. Joor eventually moved back to the South, where she continued to write and teach art at several universities.

While the history of the Newcomb College Pottery was recently highlighted in the major exhibition, “Women, Art, and Social Change: The Newcomb Pottery Enterprise,” there is considerably more work to be done in order to understand the kinds of collaboration pursued by individual women at the Pottery and how this work influenced their eventual careers as professional artists and art educators.⁵¹³ The success of the Newcomb College Pottery is a testament to the benefits of collaboration as a mode of artistic production for women artists, in particular. As curator Jessie Poesch has documented, over the course of its forty-five-year history, the Pottery “provided a partial or full livelihood, for a year or more, for a total of about ninety young women,” and produced over 70,000 pieces of pottery.⁵¹⁴ Because of the practical experience gained as a result of working at the Pottery, graduates of Newcomb College’s art department were well-prepared to pursue professional careers that allowed them financial independence. Currently, however, the majority of scholarship that has been written on the Pottery has framed it as the product of Woodward’s genius, largely overlooking the individual artists and faculty members that drove the Pottery’s financial success.⁵¹⁵ Again, as in the cases of Stephens, Yandell, Johnston, and

⁵¹³ The exhibition, “Women, Art, and Social Change: The Newcomb Pottery Enterprise,” was organized by the Newcomb Art Gallery at Tulane University and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), lasting from 2013 to 2016. See David Conradsen, et. al., *The Arts and Crafts of Newcomb Pottery* (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications, Inc., 2013).

⁵¹⁴ Poesch, *Newcomb Pottery*, 7.

⁵¹⁵ This is due partly to Woodward’s esteemed status as the “patriarch of the New Orleans art world” who “held dominion over the local art scene.” Richard Megraw, “‘The Most Natural Expressions of Locality’: Ellsworth Woodward and the Newcomb Pottery,” in *Bridging Southern Cultures: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. John Lowe (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 133, 135. In addition to his role as director of the art department at

so many other women artists, these kind of historiography has resulted in a narrow understanding of American artistic production in the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries that ignores the contributions of many individual artists. How might our understanding of trends in American decorative art and art education, for example, change if we more closely considered the influence of women like Mary Sheerer and Harriet Joor?

Like the women who worked in the Newcomb College Pottery, Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston defined their own status as professionals, attained considerable success, and supported themselves financially in a variety of media, including fields that have often been viewed by scholars as “lesser” or “minor” arts, such as illustration, public sculpture, photography, and the decorative arts. Throughout each of their careers, community and collaboration were fundamental. Each artist, as I have shown, utilized sisterhood as both a strategy for success and as a safety net that enabled them to have professional careers and progressive lifestyles—to challenge gender expectations and complicate our modern ideas of nineteenth-century New Womanhood while, through their sisterhood, also remaining within them.

Stephens broke down barriers in the educational and professional sectors of Philadelphia’s art world and continued in her career even after taking on the role of wife and mother later in life, ceasing to paint only after her son was killed in World War I. Yandell, who was consistently discussed as an example of genteel Southern propriety,

Newcomb College, Woodward held several prominent leadership positions in regional art organizations, including the Southern States Art League. Passionate about art education and optimistic about the potential of Southern artists, Woodward was also a prolific writer, public speaker, and artist in his own right. He traveled often and gave lectures on such topics as “Art in the South” and “The Quest for Art in New Orleans” in hopes of promoting and advancing the arts in that region. Transcripts of many of Woodward’s speeches can be found in Folders 1-28, Box 2, Ellsworth Woodward Papers.

eschewed marriage entirely but chose to specialize in popular and domestic sculpture. Like Stephens, Yandell gave up her sculpture career (with the exception of a few commissions for her home state of Kentucky) in order to focus on charitable work, specifically her active involvement in the Red Cross that began during World War I. Finally, Johnston was an independent, worldly, and affluent professional who scholars now understand as someone whose work was often in direct opposition to nineteenth-century American values of decorum.⁵¹⁶ However, Johnston ultimately remained consistently conventional and feminine in the public eye. Her pursuits in both documentary and pictorialist photography were in the same vein as that of her peers, while her controversial images were never published. While Johnston's portraits of the nation's leaders dominated popular magazines, she refrained from making public the many studio portraits she took of herself and her female friends dressed in men's clothing; of female models kissing one another; or the many series she took of her artist friends in various guises, including women's clothing, blackface, and a loin cloth (Figs. 128-133).⁵¹⁷ Images such as these, which number amongst the hundreds in Johnston's archive, indicate that she experimented with concepts of performance and sexuality. That she was able to partake in this kind of experimentation at all reveals the privileges she was granted as an upper-class white woman, but it also shows that Johnston was attempting to engage (in the privacy of her studio) in thinking about the relationships between gender, femininity, performativity, and sexuality.

⁵¹⁶ When these types of images did happen to become known to the public, such as in the case of her nude photographs of Washington, D.C., socialite Alice Berry, Johnston's contemporaries reacted negatively, and her reputation was threatened. Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens*, 30-31.

⁵¹⁷ These were most definitely intended for private viewing; the care with which Johnston mounted them on cabinet cards suggests that she also shared them with her close friends.

Just as Stephens', Yandell's, and Johnston's lives and careers complicate the idea of the New Woman, that ideal becomes increasingly more complex when considering those women artists who eschewed marriage and pursued bacheling and other kinds of relationships. As scholars have shown, there is little doubt that many women partook in romantic relationships with other women.⁵¹⁸ Same-sex romantic partnerships were not completely unrelated or irrelevant to women's artistic production during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵¹⁹ As this study has shown, women like the Red Rose Girls, Henrietta Cozens, Johnston, and Hewitt benefitted immensely from having the assistance and support that comes with having a partner. Indeed, Cozens' and Hewitt's support—which involved maintain the household, assisting with business operations, and even maintaining intimate correspondence with family, in the case of Hewitt—fulfilled Anna Lea Merritt's proposal in 1900 that women artists would be able to overcome the chief obstacles to their success as artists if they only had the assistance of a wife.⁵²⁰ Recent investigations by art historians have considered women artists' sexuality in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries through a close analysis of the work they produced, particularly in their representation of the female nude.⁵²¹ Yandell's and Johnston's work,

⁵¹⁸ See, for instance, John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), and Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Quill, 1998).

⁵¹⁹ While the romantic lives of male artists have been sensationalized by historians and Hollywood alike, American art historians have been relatively quiet on the topic of women artists' sexuality. In this dissertation, I have relied primarily on the artists' archives in order to more fully understand the artists' public roles as professional women artists. Despite their acuity at masterfully crafting a public image, their personal and romantic lives remained very private, which makes writing about this aspect of their lives difficult.

⁵²⁰ Merritt, "A Letter to Artists," 467-469. See the Introduction to this dissertation, pages 3-4.

⁵²¹ Andrea Van Houtven, "Marguerite Arosa's Salon Nudes, 1883-1887," paper presented at the 106th Annual College Art Association Conference, Los Angeles, February 21-24, 2018; Helen Langa, "Looking Another Way: Bohemian Modernism, the Female Nude, and Lesbian Artists,"

which is often characterized by sensual and erotic tones, could also be considered in this way.⁵²²

This dissertation has sought to reinscribe the careers and works of these understudied women artists into the American art historical narrative. For too long women artists who were not Mary Cassatt or Cecilia Beaux have occupied a place on the periphery of nineteenth-century American art scholarship. Women who achieved their success through their work in illustration, public art, photography, and the decorative arts—not to mention women artists of color and artists who worked outside of the art world’s major city centers—have been even further separated from the mainstream art historical narrative because of their chosen medium’s affiliation with popular culture and/or the so-called “minor” arts. Of course, as Nochlin observed in 1971, the act of historical recovery has the ability to reinforce the biases that are in the discipline that have rendered artists like Yandell invisible.⁵²³

paper presented at the Southeastern College Art Conference, Columbus, October 26-28, 2017; Amanda Summerlin, “Baring Themselves. Representations of the Female Nude by American Women Artists, 1880-1930” (Master’s thesis, George Washington University, 2017).

⁵²² For example, as I move forward with this project, I am interested in further exploring the ways that works like Yandell’s *Bluebeard’s Wife*, the *Kiss Tankard*, and *Ariadne* approach the subject of the female nude in a very physical way. Not only does Yandell foreground the nude body in an explicitly personal and tactile way by leaving behind evidence of her own touch, the “mark of the artist,” on these women’s bodies. Then, she also intends these objects to be held, touched, and used on a regular basis. In the case of the *Kiss Tankard*, this would mean the user would literally be holding the nude woman’s body in his or her hand, with their fingers wrapped around her torso, their thumb placed between the woman’s breasts.

⁵²³ Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, 147-148. Nochlin writes, “The feminist’s first reaction is to ... dig up examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists throughout history... in other words, to engage in the normal activity of the specialist scholar who makes a case for the importance of his very own neglected or minor master... Such attempts... are certainly worth the effort, both in adding to our knowledge of women’s achievement and of art history generally. But they do nothing to question the assumptions lying

On the other hand, there is something to be said about the fact that recovery is something that is still necessary. Unfortunately, the discipline of art history has not advanced as far as we would like. Women artists are still systemically suppressed in the historical canon and women artists still need to be recognized for the work they have accomplished. The work of Stephens, Yandell, Johnston, and countless other women artists has been analyzed by scholars who have understood their careers and their artistic outputs to be the direct result of the influence of more famous male artists.⁵²⁴ As I have shown, by looking more closely at these figures individually, by paying close attention to their archives, their public reputations, and their work, scholars will be better able to understand how entrepreneurial these women were. For every “forgotten” woman artist, there is a unique story of the strategies of resistance she enacted in order to be seen, heard, and remembered. The women artists I discuss deserve scholarly attention because they were well-known, significant players in the art world of their time, despite the significant limitations they faced as women in a period that did not necessarily embrace them as artists. Women like Stephens, Yandell, and Johnston need to be part of the conversation so that scholars can continue to dismantle the systematic oppression that continues to haunt academic fields such as art history, as well as our culture more broadly.

As the success of the Newcomb College Pottery attests, formal collaboration amongst women artists did not end with the rise of modernism, as some scholars have

behind the question, ‘Why have there been no great women artists?’ On the contrary, by attempting to answer it, they tacitly reinforce its negative implications.”

⁵²⁴ For example, Maria Ausherman argues that by the early 1890s, Johnston had developed a reputation as a photographer “as a result of her friendship with [Thomas William] Smillie,” the director of the Division of Photography at the Smithsonian. Ausherman, *The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston*, 25. As I discuss in Chapters One and Two, Stephens and Yandell have received similar treatment by historians.

suggested.⁵²⁵ While the annals of American art history have emphasized modernist women artists like Georgia O’Keeffe as exemplars of successful women with decidedly *solo* careers who could hold their own in a man’s art world, the majority of women artists continued to collaborate in one way or another well into the twentieth century and they continue to do so today. Thus, the lives and work of the women discussed in this dissertation provide a better, more nuanced understanding of what constituted the reality for professional women artists working in turn-of-the-century America.

Stephens, Yandell, Johnston, and the founding artists and educators of the Newcomb College Pottery were of a generation that both directly and indirectly inspired and enabled younger women to take up the arts. Because women in the late nineteenth century worked collaboratively to ensure their individual success, a later generation of women artists were able to create successful careers on their own terms—and this younger generation also turned to collaboration as a mode of artistic production. The all-women’s professional organizations that were founded in the 1880s and 1890s did not cease to exist with the onset of modernism. The Plastic Club, the Woman’s Art Club of Cincinnati (founded 1892), and the National Association of Women Artists (founded 1889 in New York) are still active today. Other women’s organizations continued to be established throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, and the 1960s and 1970s in particular saw exponential growth in collective work as part of the Second Wave feminist movement.⁵²⁶ Today, collective artistic work continues. In Louisville, for instance, Yandell’s legacy inspired a group of contemporary women sculptors to establish ENID, a

⁵²⁵ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 186, 207. See also page 28, note 48, in this dissertation.

⁵²⁶ The New York Society of Women Artists, for example, was founded in 1925 with the expressed mission of supporting avant-garde women artists.

“collective of Louisville-based sculptors inspired by Yandell.” Their mission echoes the strategic sisterhood I have described in this dissertation: “encourage, educate, and mentor female artists and students, as well as promote the careers of its members.”⁵²⁷

That the strategies of sisterhood used by women artists in the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries continue through to the present is clear, as the past few years have seen millions of women come together in the largest protest in human history; speak out against sexual harassment and abuse through the #metoo movement and the establishment of Times Up; and run for political office in larger numbers than ever before. Relying on collectivism, collaboration, and a resurgence of grassroots activism, women across the country are asserting their position in American society and fighting for equal representation, both in society at large and in the art world. This movement has inspired artists, scholars, and their allies to come together for collective action, often literally taking their work to the streets, such as in the case of the advertisement takeover project, “Resistance is Female.”⁵²⁸ For professionals in all areas of the arts, this has also meant speaking out against oppression and abuse in other ways. In October of 2017, an open letter circulated amongst women artists and art professionals that condemned sexual harassment in the art world in response to the resignation of Knight Landesman, a publisher of *Art Forum*. The letter noted, citing artist Jenny Holzer, that “abuse of power comes as no surprise” and calling for “art institutions, boards, and peers to consider their role in the perpetuation of different levels of sexual inequity and abuse, and how they plan to handle

⁵²⁷ Sara Havens, “PYRO Gallery showcases work of ENID, a collective of Louisville female sculptors,” *Insider Louisville*, April 26, 2017, https://insiderlouisville.com/lifestyle_culture/pyro-gallery-showcases-the-work-of-enid-a-collective-of-louisville-female-sculptors/.

⁵²⁸ See also Monica Todd, “Our Favourite All-Girl Art Collectives,” *Dazed*, April 22, 2015, <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/24420/1/our-favourite-all-girl-art-collectives>.

these issues in the future.”⁵²⁹

In the field of art history, scholars such as Jenni Sorkin have taken up where previous generations of feminist art historians left off.⁵³⁰ The feminist art history of the 1960s and 70s was focused, rightly, on re-inscribing women artists into the canon and identifying the social constructions that limited women’s participation in the art world throughout history. In the 1980s and 90s, art historians continued that work by examining the gender-biased premises and language of the canon itself.⁵³¹ Today, feminist scholars continue to analyze the shifting conditions that structured women’s artistic production over time, while also paying equal attention to the strategies and methods that *specific* women used in order to work within and outside of those parameters. In “Sisterhood as Strategy,” I have explored the factors that led to Stephens’, Yandell’s, and Johnston’s exclusion from the mainstream art historical canon; the institutional and cultural forces that shaped their work; their methods of artistic production (specifically, artistic and professional collaboration as a strategy to combat sexism); and, like, Bogart, consider them as “historical actors who shape the course of history as much as more esteemed artists.”⁵³² Rather than passive victims of sexist policies in art academies and traditional social customs that limited their participation in the broader social sphere, historians understand women artists to be active agents that succeeded in spite of, and, as my dissertation and

⁵²⁹ The letter, which is now hosted on its own website, acquired over 2,000 signatures before it was closed due to overwhelming response. It can be read in its entirety at <http://www.not-surprised.org>. See also Andrew Russeth, “Open Letter Condemns Sexual Harassment in Art World,” *ArtNews*, October 29, 2017, <http://www.artnews.com/2017/10/29/open-letter-condemns-sexual-harassment-in-art-world/>.

⁵³⁰ Jenni Sorkin, *Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

⁵³¹ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

⁵³² Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 13.

other studies have shown, often simultaneously because of, their circumstances.

Through this dissertation, along with the work of Sorkin and others, we are introduced to women whose work has continued to be left out of mainstream art histories and are reminded that collectivism amongst women is nothing new, and that women have, in all aspects of their lives, often found support, agency, and spaces in which to thrive when they worked together.⁵³³ “Sisterhood as Strategy” participates in this vein of scholarly activity by recovering the voices of three women who served as professional role models for a vast audience, and in turn works to create a far more diverse picture of the people and art forms that constituted early modern American visual culture.

⁵³³ See also Christine Filippone, *Science, Technology, and Utopias: Women Artists and Cold War America* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

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